

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FRIENDS, FAMILY OR FOE? FOSTERING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LAY
LEADERS AND THE NEWLY APPOINTED ORDAINED LEADERS OF ANGLICAN
CONGREGATIONS.

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the degree of Professional Doctorate.

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

Friends, Family or Foe? Fostering good relationships between lay leaders and the newly appointed ordained leaders of Anglican congregations.

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Traditional patterns of leadership in the Church of England are changing. The demands of mission in post-Christendom, and renewed attention to the theology of social trinitarianism have focussed attention on the health of the local congregation as the place where the future of the church will be determined. Aware of the damage that disharmony can cause, the Diocese of Chelmsford has supported this research which examines how good relationships between lay and ordained leaders may be fostered, as a contribution to the equipping of congregations for mission.

A process of facilitated conversations was held with lay and ordained leaders at the end of a ministerial vacancy, after an appointment had been made. These were analysed in the light of both theological and sociological perspectives on the nature of priesthood and of the local church, and of my own experience as a parish priest and training officer in the church.

The process of facilitated conversations enabled differences of attitude and understanding to be articulated. Of particular note was a strong preference for, or reaction against, the use of familial language to describe the local congregation. These differences could be categorised as a contrast between the views held by those who had received no academic training in theology and those who had. A revised pattern of meetings is proposed in the light of these results and the feedback received.

The conclusion is that relationships between the lay leaders and the newly appointed priest will benefit from facilitated conversations at the outset of this new period of ministry about the nature of the priestly role and the local church. A good relationship, marked by improved mutual understanding and respect between leaders, will better enable the parishes of the Diocese of Chelmsford to re-envision the missionary task.

Key words: congregation, lay-clergy relationships, family, social Trinity, ecclesiology, ordinary theology.

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FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

FRIENDS, FAMILY OR FOE: Fostering good relationships between lay leaders and the newly-appointed ordained leaders of Anglican congregations.

ELIZABETH ANN JORDAN

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Chapter One

Structure and Context

This chapter will describe the structure of this thesis and set the research within the context of the changing patterns of ministry in the Diocese of Chelmsford, the wider Anglican church and my professional life. The subject of clergy-lay relations is located within the discussion of ecclesiology, priesthood and Anglican congregations, identifying the gap in knowledge that this research addresses. The chapter concludes by establishing the place of this research in the field of practical theology.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the period between the appointment of a new priest in a Church of England church and the end of the first two months after the licensing service. I have carried out a process of facilitated conversations with the priest and the lay leaders in five cases and evaluated the effectiveness of this process in enabling discussion of models of leadership.

The research question is:

"How can the period immediately after the appointment of a new minister and during the period of induction be best used as a significant moment to foster good relationships between the lay leaders and newly appointed priest?"

The Structure of the Research

The following table demonstrates how I arrived at the conclusions and recommendations that I make in the final chapter.

Component of the thesis	Purpose within the research	Means of Achievement	Location in the Thesis
A. Survey of literature relating to Ecclesiology, Priesthood and Laity	Mapping the underlying theoretical assumptions about church congregations	Literature Review	Appendix One
B. Publishable Article	To relate the literature about Interim Ministry to my own experience	Article published in Practical Theology journal	Appendix Two
C. Research proposition: Good relations between lay and ordained leaders of local churches are essential to fulfilling the churches' mission. They are furthered by a shared understanding of models of leadership	Motivation for research	Reading of literature and personal experience	Chapter One

D. Context and background	Location of research in current transitions in church's ministry	Survey of literature relating to clergy lay relationships, account of changes in Chelmsford Diocese.	Chapter One
E. Theoretical framework	Creation of distinctive framework for interpretation of my own practice	Exploration of inter-connection of theology, social sciences and self	Chapter Two
F. Pilot study	Testing of process of facilitated conversations	Two visits to newly appointed priest and to lay leaders.	Chapter Three
G. Methodology and methods used in analysis resulting from theoretical framework and pilot study	Establishing reliability of research	Reading of literature on research methods and applying this to pilot study	Chapter Three
H. Report of facilitated conversations	Examination of process designed to aid conversations about models of leadership	Visits and 'phone calls to five parishes. Conversations recorded and the scripts examined	Chapter Four

I. Analysis of the effectiveness of the facilitated conversations	Demonstration of the insights gained from attention to theology, social science and self	Analysis paying close attention to verbal and practical messages.	Chapter Five.
J. Conceptual and Practical Conclusions and Recommendations.	Demonstration of contribution to knowledge and practice	Evaluation of research undertaken.	Chapter Six

A. Papers 1 and Paper 2 were prepared for the University of Birmingham, a partner in the consortium which delivers the Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology and have already been examined. Paper 1, (Appendix One) in accordance with the requirements of Birmingham University, is 14,000 words. It contains a review of the literature relating to ecclesiology, and the theology of priesthood and of the laity, reflecting my belief that ecclesiology, priesthood and lay theology are unseen influences in the life of congregations, tripping up the naive practitioner and clashing with each other in sub-liminal ways. This reconnaissance of the territory was necessary before practical research could begin. The paper also contains a critical assessment of the work of R. A. Lambourne, a doctor and theologian working in Birmingham. Though not systematic, his exploration of the interconnectedness of the Gospel accounts of healing, his own experience in this country and in Africa and his belief in the corporate calling of the church have been an indication of the value of allowing reading, experience and reflection to interact with each other.

B. Paper 2, (Appendix Two) also examined and passed by Birmingham University, is a piece of theological reflection on the time I spent as an Interim Minister in a parish in the West Midlands. An Interim Minister of a congregation has a particularly privileged viewpoint from which to observe the dynamics of the transition from one ordained leader to another. As an outsider appointed by the

diocese one has distance and a set term of appointment, while as the temporary leader of a congregation one is given access to its inner life. An article based on the paper was printed in *Practical Theology* in 2012.

C. Following a move to Chelmsford Diocese and transfer to Anglia Ruskin University, I was asked by the Director of Mission and Ministry to continue research into ministerial vacancies. Thus an existing interest in clergy-lay relationships was developed to focus attention on the period when a new priest arrives and the relationships with lay leaders are being developed. My proposition that good relationships within the parish and especially between the leaders of the church are essential for the effective mission of the church was both individual motivation and the reason for diocesan support.

Ministry within the Church of England is changing and the Diocese of Chelmsford is attempting to be pro-active in meeting future challenges. The survey of work done on clergy-lay relations (**D.**) demonstrates the relevance of this research to new patterns of ministry and indicates the contribution to knowledge and practice it could offer.

E. The theoretical framework establishes a conceptual approach to the study of lay-clergy relations which attends to the theological and sociological identity of local churches. The theoretical framework in Chapter Two also addresses the epistemological and ethical issues surrounding research for a professional doctorate, writing myself into the research and being theologically reflective throughout.

The choice of methods of analysis and the pilot study happened in tandem. The pilot study (**F.**) more than confirmed the value of the conversations that I facilitated. I noted how ready the participants were to tell me their narratives and interpretation of events and the choice of narrative analysis and conversation analysis flowed from this experience. My decisions about methods of analysis of these meetings were derived from the theoretical framework and the pilot study (**G.**).

The meetings with lay and ordained leaders and the subsequent writing up of the recorded conversations took place over several months. **(H.)** Analysis of the conversations, using the insights of theology, the social sciences and my own experience yielded an unexpected result: I realised I was listening to a conversation that included an 'ordinary theology' (Astley, 2002) of the church and of priesthood **(I)**. This realisation has formed the basis of the recommendations made for my own and diocesan practice and demonstrates how this research has made a contribution to knowledge and practice.

Setting the scene - The national and diocesan context.

There will be a significant decrease in the number of stipendiary clergy in the next decade. Forty seven per cent. of the stipendiary clergy in Chelmsford Diocese, for example, are expected to retire before 2021 (Diocese of Chelmsford, 2011 p.1). A pattern of church life which relies on a full-time, resident priest for each parish has not been tenable for at least thirty years (Tiller, 1983), but the reduction in numbers of such priests has accelerated in recent years. This has been due both to retirements and to a reduction of the number of people applying, being selected and trained for full-time, paid ministry. In addition, the average age of those who have been ordained has risen, so that they are working for less time before themselves retiring. At the same time the number of those offering for non-stipendiary ordained and lay ministry has greatly increased. Consequently, the pattern of ministry in each church has changed. A church service may now have parts or whole that are lay-led, and adult education, pastoral visiting and preparation for baptisms, weddings and funerals are being taken by lay people, or clergy working on a part-time basis. Although the Church of England, both at diocesan and national level, has been engaged in a programme of 're-imagining the church's ministry' as one of the three 'Quinquennium Goals' (Church of England, GS 1815, 2010), no consensus has emerged.

At the beginning of 2015, as this thesis was being written, The *Reform and Renewal* programme is encouraging debate in the areas of deployment, finance,

leadership and administration (Church of England, 2015a). Reaction to these proposals has demonstrated the strength of feeling these issues raise (Handley, 2015). This research, which considers how the recipients of established patterns of priestly pastoral care may be prepared to change their expectations, is especially timely.

The arrival of Bishop Stephen Cottrell as Bishop of Chelmsford in 2010 triggered renewed enthusiasm to find a way to enable each congregation to be a '*Transforming Presence*' in its community, less dependent on the stipendiary priest and more self-sufficient, whilst still connected firmly to the surrounding churches in the deanery and an integral part of the diocese (Diocese of Chelmsford, 2011). The diocese is currently working on the development of 'Mission and Ministry Units,' which will be clusters of parishes that share the oversight of a stipendiary priest, with a team of other lay and ordained ministers, most of whom will not be paid. It has been suggested that each church should identify its own, local leaders so that it is able to sustain its particular identity and gifts when linked with other churches. Such an arrangement would mark a radical change in the role of a stipendiary priest, no longer the pastor of a single parish, but with the responsibility for equipping others to lead worship and carry out pastoral care, teaching and evangelisation.

The reduction in stipendiary clergy has meant that a process of pastoral re-organisation is necessary. Although the right to appoint a Vicar to a parish is still held by both individual and corporate patrons, the diocesan Pastoral Committee may suspend this right if there is a need to re-allocate the responsibilities of that post. In most cases this has meant that a larger group of churches becomes part of the 'charge' given to the new appointee. In rural areas, with a much lower population than in the past, this can mean that a priest has ten or more parishes to care for, each with a low attendance. Hinckford deanery in the north west of the diocese, for example, has thirty eight churches, and in January 2015 had thirteen priests, of whom six were stipendiary. The average number on the electoral roll at each church is thirty. This trend, which shows no

sign of decreasing in the near future, has resulted in spreading diminishing resources more thinly, causing stress to clergy who have attempted to carry out ministry as if there were one priest per parish and succeeding, at best, in maintaining existing activity without the capacity to respond to new challenges and opportunities (Diocese of Chelmsford, 2011, p. 10).

My personal context

I was appointed as Lay Development Adviser in Chelmsford Diocese in 2011. I was asked to investigate ways in which lay people could be encouraged and resourced to take more responsibility for the leadership of their local churches. Having already begun the professional doctorate in 2009, studying the changing relationship between lay and ordained leaders, I was encouraged to make the period at the end of a ministerial vacancy the focus of my research.

I was ordained a deacon in the Church of England in 1987. I have worked in parishes and in the vocation and training departments of three dioceses. As one responsible for training both ordained and lay leaders in congregations for a quarter of a century I have been part of discussions about changing patterns of ministry for all of this time. I have been particularly interested in the attitudes of lay people to the ordained and *vice versa*. I have noted a sense of distance and occasionally alienation between ordained and lay members of the church and this was confirmed by research into the priestly formation of Ordained Local Ministers (Jordan, 2008). Those who were being ordained to serve in the congregations in which they had worshipped for many years were asked by friends and fellow church members not to change once they were ordained. "Don't become like one of them" was a common plea. This occurred in churches where there was a good relationship between the priest and congregation, often marked by respect and humour, but the sense of difference remained. Putting on a clerical collar for the first time was a significant marker of a change in the newly ordained: it felt like "going over to the other side" (Jordan, 2008, p.223). This research ignited my interest both in the lay view of the priesthood and in engaging in conversation as a form of research.

In my role as a parish development officer I have also spent some time working with congregations in conflict with their priest. I have observed the dynamics of these conflicts and noted the intensity of emotion that these conflicts arouse, often out of proportion to the presenting issues. An overheard remark that "it's just like a family arguing" (Jordan, 2014, p.1), prompted further examination of Family Systems Theory as a dialogue partner in the study of congregations.

In the year before moving to Chelmsford Diocese I worked as an Interim Minister in two churches in the West Midlands. One of these churches was mourning the loss of a priest who had given faithful service for twelve years; the other had had four priests in the previous ten years. Before further long term appointments were made, each needed to reflect on what had happened and to plan for the future. Interim Ministry is well established in North American churches, usually following such circumstances as the departure of a priest after lengthy service, the departure of a priest after scandal or pastoral breakdown, or the failure of a succession of appointments (Dale Smith, 2009, p.4). Interim ministry has since become common in the Church of Scotland and in the Congregational Church in England, and appointments of Interim Ministers are beginning to be made in the Church of England (Thomas, 2010; Diocese of Chelmsford, 2014). During a time of ministerial vacancy there is much potential either for healthy growth or for patterns of disease to flourish. Rather than fearing that all will collapse during the vacancy and that the post should be filled as soon as possible, Mead (2005) encourages church leaders (in this case, those with responsibility for making appointments) to seize the moment when a congregation is open to change.

My own convictions about the appropriate leadership of a church have also affected the language which is used. I have been part of the Local Ministry Network since its early years, developed following John Tiller's review of ministry in the Church of England, published in 1983. Tiller, realising that there would be a significant reduction in the numbers of clergy due to retirement, advocated a

radical redeployment of ministerial resources to support local churches. The Local Ministry Network has connected those concerned to develop shared leadership and the participation of all church members in its life. It is now a worldwide network, and I attended the Second International Symposium in Texas in February 2015 (Living Stones, 2015). I understand a 'good' relationship between lay and ordained church leaders (as used in this thesis) to be one in which there is a mutually enabling exchange of ideas and gifts, an awareness of respective roles and responsibilities and a common purpose and objectives.

Clergy and laity - a confusion of role.

Even in a church which does not have a structured leadership team who are intentionally sharing leadership, Churchwardens and, at the time of appointment, parish representatives, have significant authority. While the ordination service and the service of licensing and installation acknowledges only one leader of the local church, the Church of England does officially recognise the authority of lay people. The Churchwardens, for example, are the principal lay officers of a parish and are officers of the bishop. Their duties include: representing the laity and co-operating with the Incumbent; encouraging the parishioners in the practice of religion and promoting unity and peace among them; maintaining order and decency in the church and churchyard and ownership of the plate, ornaments and other moveable goods of the church. They are ex-officio members of the PCC. (Church of England, 2014d, Canon E1).

Hooker, the architect and theologian of the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, was committed to government of the church by consent, representation and constitutionality (Avis, 2002, p.48). He saw the sovereign as "the common parent" of both clergy and laity, convocation and Parliament, (Ecclesiastical Politie. V111, vi, 8: 3, quoted by Avis, p. 50) presiding over each. Thus Parliament, composed largely of lay people, may make laws for the church. He wished to restrain the right of the monarch to decide doctrine, as Henry VIII had done, though recognised the monarch as "the supreme lay person, embodying the realm" (Avis, 2002, p.50).

In the early 19th century the Tractarians resisted the interference of the State in church affairs as they believed this was a usurpation of God's mandate to *priests* to teach, rebuke, instruct or correct (Avis, 2002, p.180). It still remains more likely that local churches in the Anglo Catholic tradition will be less open to lay participation in leading worship or taking decisions and may, indeed, treat the phrase 'lay leader' as an oxymoron. Avis, however, concludes that "What is really distinctive [about Anglicanism] is the way that Catholic Order is combined with conciliar (representative and constitutional) structures in which laity and presbyters play their part in church government" (2002, pp. 202, 332). It is apparent, though, that this history has left room for disagreement about the respective authority of lay and ordained leaders and such uncertainty, creating hopes and expectations, is a fertile ground for the development of discontent.

The appointment process exemplifies the interacting roles of lay and ordained people. The Churchwardens are responsible for the running of the church, including organising services and the fabric and finances, during the ministerial vacancy. They are supervised by the Area Dean, the senior cleric in the deanery. With the aid of a diocesan officer, usually ordained, a role description containing details of the purpose of the appointment and its key responsibilities is drawn up. The context of the post is described and the significant partners and colleagues with whom the new priest will work are specified. An information pack about the area, often called the parish profile, is also prepared.

Two lay members of the Church Council are appointed to act as its representatives in the selection of the Incumbent. This has traditionally been the role of the Churchwardens, though this need no longer be the case. Each PCC must decide whether to pass a resolution under section 3(1) or (2) of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993, deciding whether women's priestly ministry is acceptable. A decision must be made whether or not to advertise the post. It is also usual to carry out formal interviews (Church of England, 2014).

The interviews will usually be chaired by the Archdeacon. The Area Dean is usually present and there may be a representative of the patron if this is not the Bishop. Members of the church will provide refreshments and give a tour of the area to any applicants who do not know it well. This gives an opportunity for a larger number of people from the churches to get a glimpse of the candidates and the parish representatives will often informally seek their views. Great efforts are made to arrive at a decision upon which all can agree and though the Bishop has the casting vote, the parish representatives may veto the decision up to a week after the interviews. The date of the licensing service will be arranged by the Bishop and the Area Dean, in conjunction with the Churchwardens. The Area Dean, Churchwardens and the incoming priest will make arrangements for the service.

The time of ministerial vacancy is a significant moment of change, when new ideas and practices may take root (Jordan, 2012). In many cases the pastoral charge that the incoming priest receives will not be the same as that vacated by the minister whose departure began the vacancy. It is likely that the priest will have more parishes under his or her care. The relationship between the ordained leader and the congregation is changing.

The theoretical background: literature on ecclesiology, priesthood and congregations

Having examined the literature relating to ecclesiology, priesthood and the theology of the laity my conclusion is that attention to an understanding of the Trinity as a relational community has had a profound effect on understanding the nature of the church (Literature Review, Appendix One, p.206). The church, which derives its character from God, is seen as a community of people, rather than an institution. "We cannot expect of the church," Zizioulas writes, "anything less than a sign and a reflection of God's way of being in creation" (1991, p.28). Thus the nature of the church is derived from the nature of God: a trinitarian ecclesiology declares that the church is created by God's invitation and exists wherever the Spirit of Christ is present (Moltmann, 1977). The idea of the church as *koinonia*, or

communion, has been widely adopted by those who wish to escape from institutional monopoly on grace exercised by ecclesiastical hierarchy (L.R. App. One, p. 206). The Second Vatican Council and, in particular, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church ("*Lumen Gentium*") at first promised a renewed understanding of the equal membership of church members as "the people of God," but later reaction stressed the church as the sign of God's presence and mediator of salvation and so re-established a hierarchical relationship between priest and people (Donovan, 1992, 8). Within the Anglican church, always a less rigid structure, liberation theology and the charismatic movement refreshed church life through the many small groups which have met to pray, plan and study in between formal worship. Greenwood concludes that the church must be not only trinitarian in character, but also eschatological: exemplifying the future hope of all creation (1996, p.61). The church in the UK has responded (albeit slowly) to the awareness that the mission field is not only a foreign country, but that the church at home must adopt a missionary character. Shaped by his experiences in India, Newbigin declared the necessity of the local church being the sign, instrument and foretaste of God's Kingdom (1989). It must express the character of God as it carries out God's mission. As membership of a faith community becomes a minority interest, members of a congregation are increasingly identified as a discrete group within society and their behaviour seen as an indication of the health and truth of the Christian gospel. The ground has been prepared for the licensing of 'Fresh Expressions' of church, following the Mission-Shaped Church report (Church of England, 2004, p. 9), which has identified the church as a community of those in redeemed relationships, called to be the presence of Christ in the world, His body on earth (Williams, 2006).

Thus trinitarian ecclesiology has altered the understanding of the church, and interest in the mission of God has changed the understanding of the role of laity (L. R. App. One, p. 221). My review of the diverse literature on the role and purpose of lay people in the local church demonstrated that the emphasis has changed from the dispersed discipleship of all Christians in the world around

them to a focus on their role as living parables of the Gospel, worshipping and witnessing in a congregation (L. R. App. One pp. 227,245). Grounded in an individual's baptism, incorporation into the fellowship of the church has been stressed in liturgy and practice and baptism interpreted as the commission for ministry (W.C.C., 1982, p.21). While the Local Ministry movement has welcomed this recognition of the centrality of lay ministry, some see it as the fulfilment of fears expressed in the 1970s that the institutional church would absorb the energies of lay people. The message that the laity are vital to the mission of the church has given a clear direction to lay ministry but may have limited its scope (L. R. App. One, p.228).

There has been an historic reluctance on the part of Anglican ecclesiologists to consider the nature of congregations for fear of being that most un-Anglican of states: 'congregationalist.' The Church of England has retained the authority of bishops and repressed the attempts of Puritans and Dissenters to give each congregation autonomy over its own life. The division of the country into parishes served by a church and an ordained minister, largely settled by the thirteenth century,¹ has been the basic unit of church life rather than the worshipping congregation. Even in 2014 a nation-wide survey found that 84% of the clergy said that the parish system was 'important' or 'very important' to them (Handley, 2014). In the past the parish could be deemed part of Christendom, a spiritual kingdom where the church's rule was accepted. It is now the mission field, the focus of missionary activity. Recent publications are concerned with the 'health' of the congregation, its leadership and its activity (e.g. Warren, 2009, 2012), for, as Tiller observed (1988), the mission of the local church demands a committed core of regular worshippers to carry it out.

¹ Pastoral care had been offered to defined geographical areas as early as the sixth century, often as extensions of monastic communities, within whose boundaries local taxes were raised. The twelfth century saw a halt to the rapid expansion in the number of churches built caused by changes to Canon Law (Campbell, 1979, p.134) and a clearer definition of parochial responsibilities (Jones, 2000, p.48) so that by the thirteenth century the present-day pattern was discernible.

The interaction between the parish and the congregation is therefore significant in understanding the nature of each entity in the Church of England. In the Church of England it is the Parochial Church Council (PCC) which is responsible for the upkeep of the building and the payments to a diocesan fund, the bulk of which pays clerical stipends. The PCC is usually composed of the regular worshipping members of a local church, though membership is open to anyone on the Electoral Roll. The income of the church derives from fees paid for weddings and funerals, income from lettings and fundraising activity and from the voluntary giving of church members. It is, therefore, largely the congregation who must give time and money to maintain the church. The priest, however, is appointed to the benefice, which will consist of one or more parishes; geographical areas in which all activity is the priest's responsibility. This is expressed as the 'cure (care) of souls' (Church of England, 2011b). The congregation may resent the time spent by the priest in hospitals, community centres, pubs and so on (Hough and Wheeler, 1988). (A school may take a large amount of time, but this is a long established and acceptable area of parochial work as schools were often founded as adjuncts to churches). The decreasing value of the church's inherited wealth has resulted in increasing reliance on the voluntary giving of the congregation. There has been a *de facto* change in the balance of power between congregation and diocese. This is apparent at the time of appointment as the congregation are, through the parish representatives, consulted about the appointment rather than, as was the case a couple of decades ago, simply sent a priest chosen by the Bishop.

As the congregation changes from being the 'flock,' cared for by one shepherd, to being itself the ministering community, the roles of lay and ordained members of the church is in a state of flux. The change has been partly recognised in the revised ordination service which, though it declares that priests are "*to lead God's people in proclaiming his glorious love,*" they are to do this "*with God's people*" (Church of England, 2000). There is, though, no suggestion that a member of the laity might exercise leadership. The ordination service, formative for many

of the priests to whom I spoke, appears to pay scant attention to the evidence of at least half a century of lay discontent with this subservient role (Grubb, 1964, Gibbs, 1971).

The literature relating to clergy-lay relationships

Disputes and discontent in church life may present with other issues but underlying questions of the nature of the church and the nature of ministry may be discerned as unspoken, and hence unresolved, disagreements (Pickard, 2009, p. 31). The review of literature relating to the theology of priesthood uncovered many interpretations of the role of priests, varying according to church tradition and the present needs of the church (L. R. App One, pp. 221-227). Those who train for ordination must study the subject exhaustively, but the work to be done at the start of a vacancy to prepare papers for applicants is, for many lay people, the first opportunity to explore the role of a priest in a local church.

My own interest in this subject was prompted by research which, although it took place amongst people, both ordained and lay, who were committed to shared ministry and a relational model of priesthood (Greenwood, 2009, pp. 98-100), indicated a profound sense of difference between clergy and laity. That difference could be marked by respect as well as by suspicion (Jordan, 2008). Literature on the subject usually holds the clergy responsible for being different from the norm. Davie finds that Anglican clergy are considerably more liberal and left wing than Anglican laity, in contrast to Grubb, who asserts that clergy are both poor and proud, and who resents the fact the clergy use distinctive theological jargon, and are indifferent or ignorant about secular work; though still make pronouncements about it (Davie, 1994, p. 155, Grubb, 1964, pp50-71, Kroll, 1963). McLeod also makes reference to the clergy being out of touch, but finds this more a matter for ridicule than for anger (2001).

Russell records "constant reference by the laity to domineering clericalism" (1980, 5). The report, *All are Called*, notes clerical failure to honour Monday work, matched by lay disparagement of clergy who haven't done a real job (Church of England, 1985, pp. 5-8). It notes fear amongst laity that if they

focus primarily on the world beyond the institutional church, as advocated by, for example, Gibbs and Moreton (1974), they will lose out in finance and power to clergy who have time to sit on decision-making committees.

The congregation may have changed from clients to colleagues (Cameron 1999), but many clergy say they have not been trained to cope with this new role. Russell asserted that one result of the rise of professionalism amongst the clergy was the failure to work with those who are volunteers (Russell 1980). As part of the application process for selection for ministerial training ordination candidates will each have read and rehearsed the reasons for a distinction between lay and ordained ministry. While much literature reminds the priest that they remain a deacon (and bishops that they remain priests), few assert that the ordained remain lay (Pickard, 2009, p.vii, Tomlin, 2014, p.115). Sharing the work of the diaconate (service), the priesthood (intercession) and episcopate (oversight) has already encouraged a more flexible allocation of tasks and roles (Croft, 2008). Yet the grandeur of the ordination service, retaining its distinction between sheep and shepherd, does not encourage inter-species relationships.

It has proved hard to both maintain a distinctive role for the ministerial priesthood and to promote the active ministry of lay people. The demands of mission in an increasingly secular West mean that ordained and lay must work together, but there is considerable disagreement about their respective roles. Theologians, psychologists and sociologists have each addressed the interdependence of lay and ordained members of the church. Sociologists, for example, identify priesthood as a social construct, varying in time and place (Yates, 1998, Hennessey, 2003). Consequently, the priest's own self-identity will require external affirmation and clergy may be more in need of such emotional support than most other people (Francis, 1996, 2003). Appreciation of this need for others has coincided with a renewed appreciation of the relatedness of all human beings, especially in participation in the life of the trinitarian God, and the responsibility of the local congregation for mission (Greenwood, 1996). But it is rare that there is conversation between these disciplines.

The continuing influence of the Orthodox tradition is seen in Lossky's ideas of communal understandings of identity, made available to a Western audience by Rowan Williams (2012), and Zizioulas' relational understanding of all of creation (Fox, 2001, pp.53-70). Both have linked the identity of humanity with the nature of the Godhead, a social community as propounded by the Cappadocian Fathers of the 4th century. Greenwood has developed this work for the English situation, examining the role of the priest in relation to the local church community by building on his understanding of the essentially relational nature of the Godhead (2009, pp.10-14). He notes the importance of basing understanding of the ministerial priesthood in a trinitarian rather than Christological discourse (1994, p.86), writing that ministerial orders based on the model of the Good Shepherd (John 10: 10), or the imitation of Christ tend towards individualism, while those grounded in trinitarian theology emphasise relationship amongst the Christian community.

This perception that relationships within the Trinity are indicative of ideal relationships within the church has been influential in recent thinking about the orders of ministry. Just as the persons of the Godhead are known in their interaction, the offices of the church are constituted by their relationship with the whole congregation. Bishop, priest and deacon are not, therefore, independent offices, but make sense only in interdependence in the community (Zizioulas, 1985, pp. 221-222). Each is a relational term, comparable to that of sibling, so that the ontological change effected at ordination is a change in relationship, not a change in an individual's being unrelated to those with whom the priest lives and works (Greenwood, 2009, pp. 98-100).

A Gap in Knowledge: Improving clergy-lay relationships.

While the literature suggests that conflict between lay and ordained members of the church is likely to happen, in fact little is reported. This may be due to the 'culture of niceness' that Savage observes (2006). The anger of the 60s and 70s appears to have subsided and the clergy, ordained later in life, are more

likely to know something of lay people's lives. Yet the assumption of difference and expectation of misunderstanding remains (Jordan, 2008).

The few suggestions for improving relationships that exist are based on examinations of the *systemic* reasons for a lack of common focus. One result of the abuse scandals in the Roman Catholic Church has been awareness and analysis of the culture of clericalism which has permitted and even facilitated this abuse. Clerical culture is expressed in everyday behaviour and both empowers people and limits their imagination (Wilson, 2008, p.5). It is highly resistant to change because it is largely unacknowledged and because it satisfies the needs of those within it. Wilson's suggestions for changing the relation between Roman Catholic priests and laity are based on an analysis of how cultures change (2008, pp.96-109).

Clericalism in the Church of England has been identified in the report, *All are Called* as a "pervasive reality in which clergy and laity are deeply involved whether or not they want it and whether or not they know it " (1985, pp.5-8). Thus, although reasons for lay suspicion of clergy are identified, it is recognised that problems exist because of a systemic and institutional fault, not the fault of either clergy or laity solely, nor of individuals, but of the relationship between them. The failure to share a common journey of discipleship and the legacy of a long history of deference, dependence and exclusive access to theological education appears to have contributed to this (Audenshaw paper no. 63).

Thus the literature demonstrates many reasons that exist for poor relationships. There has been much work on the reasons for conflict in local church, little on how they might be resolved and even less on how good relationships might be fostered in the first place. "The relationship between clergy and lay people is of paramount importance to the life and work of the church in its ministry to its own members and to the world" (Kroll, 1963, p. 3). In a time of transition from one understanding of the relation of lay and ordained to one

another this research will investigate a process by which those involved at parish level might gain a greater understanding of each other's position.

This research as practical theology

As has been indicated in the survey of theological work on lay and clergy roles, use has been made of both theological and social science. Practical Theology is marked by a willingness to engage in such dialogue and this research is firmly set in that field of enquiry. It will be both a pragmatic enquiry, examining what kind of process is most feasible and effective in improving the quality of the relationship between lay and ordained leaders, and grounded in a Biblical and theological understanding of priesthood and the Christian congregation. I am, indeed, assuming that if something does not work in practice a question is posed about its theological and theoretical undergirding (Russell 1980). The literature on lay-clergy relations has drawn from a variety of theological strands, the social sciences and psychology as well as practical experience. The theoretical framework to be used in this research will need to incorporate all these strands and find a way to integrate them. Chapter Two describes this theoretical framework (pp. 23-42).

The metaphor of a conversation, often mutually critical, is used by many practical theologians to describe the interaction between theology and the social sciences (Pattison, 2000). It is also used in many accounts of theological reflection and Christian devotion, as well as hermeneutics (Astley, 2004, p. 45). The theme of conversation is central to this piece of practical theology as well. I have held conversations in the literal sense as the mode of research and also as a method of analysis and verification as I have engaged with colleagues. The theoretical framework for this research is designed to enable a conversation between the voices of theology, the social sciences and my own experience. The resulting dialogue has allowed an often unheard voice to be audible; that of the 'ordinary theologians' of the local church (Astley 2002).

This introduction to the work carried out investigating lay-clergy relationships has identified several gaps in knowledge. I have looked at a wide variety of perspectives on the life of a local church, including literature on Interim Ministry, congregational studies, Family Systems Theory, relational ontology and relational leadership (L. R. App One, pp. 214-236, 248-258). This research will examine the connections between these perspectives and demonstrate how consideration of the interaction between them yields further insights.

I have noted that the literature that exists on lay-clergy relations is largely about reasons for discord and does not suggest an adequate theological view of the nature of the relationship (Pickard, 2009, p.110). This research will, through revised practice, develop further the theologies of priesthood which emphasise the necessity of attention to the relational aspect of priesthood for a satisfactory understanding of either lay or priestly roles (Chapter Five, pp. 146-154).

I have chosen to attend to the relationship between lay and ordained leaders of a congregation, not with the whole congregation. The period of time chosen, the end of a ministerial vacancy, is one in which the Churchwardens and parish representatives are fully involved and it was natural to ask to meet them in the same groupings as they were meeting to carry out their responsibilities. The focus on the lay *leaders* of the congregation was not, however, disadvantageous as I was making the assumption, shared by those recently appointed, that these were the people with whom it was important that understanding and respect were established.

It will also be apparent that I have investigated the relationship between those who are ordained and those who are not, without regard for gender. This is both because I was directed to the churches which participated by the Area Bishops, without the capacity to make choices according to gender, and because I did not see evidence that indicates that the laity's view of the ordained, or vice versa, is distinguished by gender.

As a contribution to practice this research is unusual in being an examination of a process, rather than data gathered by the commoner methods of interview, questionnaire or focus group. It has been more akin to the kind of work I carry out in my routine professional practice. Since observation of my own practice has been one of the factors being examined, a new research methodology has been used to incorporate the contributions of self, theology and social sciences (Chapter Three, pp. 46-49). Whilst this research is presented in part-fulfilment of a professional doctorate, the methodology and methods used are, I suggest, also useable by any other practitioner working, as I do, with Anglican congregations.

Summary

The purpose of this piece of research is, as has been as described at the beginning of this chapter, to examine how the period immediately after the appointment of a new minister and during the period of induction can be best used to foster good relationships between the lay leaders and the newly appointed priest. This chapter has established the national, diocesan and personal context for the research and, through a survey of the relevant literature, indicated the gap in knowledge about lay-clergy relationships which it addresses. Chapter Two will describe the theoretical framework which will be used to examine the relationships between lay and ordained leadership of congregations in the Church of England.

Chapter Two

The Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis showed that there is a theoretical and practical gap in knowledge about how to develop good relationships between ordained and lay leaders of congregations. The connections that have been made between the disciplines of psychology, sociology and theology have not contributed to this discussion. Studies of the theology of priesthood have rarely explored the priest's relationship with lay members of the church and analysis of the reasons for discord in congregations have not resulted in proposals for improvement.

This chapter will examine the nature of congregations in the Church of England as the place where lay and ordained leaders encounter each other at the beginning of their relationship. It will examine and justify the use of the voices of theology, sociology and my own experience and demonstrate how each both contributes to and corrects the other. The nature of congregations will determine the way in which relationships in them are to be examined and a theoretical framework will be designed to enable research into my work with lay and ordained leaders in the Church of England.

The Purpose and Nature of the Theoretical Framework

I wish to investigate how the period immediately after the arrival of a new minister and during the period of induction can be best used to improve the quality of the relationship between ordained and lay leaders. The focus of the research is the encounter between the priest and the lay leaders chosen by the congregation to be their representatives. It is the nature of a congregation, which is the entity at the forefront of the minds of the lay leaders, which determines the partners in this conversation. This identity will be shown to be both theological and sociological and the framework will delineate the particular contribution of

each for the purposes of this research. There is also a third partner, myself, since this is a piece of research for a professional doctorate into my own practice and context.

The Local Congregation

Theologians have drawn from a wide variety of sources of authority in order to examine the nature of the Church. The Church of England affirms Scripture as the primary source of revelation (1999, Article VI) but, of course, this does not end debate about issues of translation and interpretation. Elements within the Church of England have looked to the Bible, the Early Church, the Orthodox tradition and modern and traditionalist Roman Catholic theologians (L.R. App. One pp. 207-209).

Concerns about the future prompted the commissioning of the *Mission Shaped Church* report in 2004 (Church of England, 2004). In the debate in General Synod that followed Archbishop Rowan Williams asked whether Scripture records that Jesus founded the church as an institution or simply proclaimed salvation for individuals who later gathered together (Williams, 2004). The church, he concluded, is the community who obey Christ's command to 'do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22: 18 cf. 1 Corinthians 11: 24-5). The authority of Scripture was thus employed to affirm a sacramental identity for the local congregation, not reliant on a national or regional entity, consistent with Orthodox and Roman Catholic ecclesiologies (Volf, 1998, p.107). Thus there is agreement that the *practice* of the church, in the celebration of the Eucharist in each local congregation, is the centre of its identity.

Anglican ecclesiology roots the purpose of the church in its local manifestation, in the parish system which is the primary structure of the church of England (Eccleston, 1988; Croft, 2006). It is in this territorial space that growth in numbers, spirituality and service must take place. In recent decades, however, the future of the parish system has been questioned. The *Mission Shaped Church* report (Church of England, 2004) drew on sociological examination of the effect of the loss of a 'meta-narrative' in a postmodern society and the need to operate

amongst the networks of interest groups in 'fresh expressions' of church. This is not the first time that the church has been encouraged to adopt a new form to meet contemporary needs: Tiller, for example, proposed a radical re-ordering to meet the decline in stipendiary clergy (Tiller, 1983). This indicates that the nature of a church may emerge, rather than having a pre-existent ontology, being a cultural form as well as a theological entity. It is also clear that the visible church fails to live up to its ideal calling. Theologians may argue that the present, visible church is unfinished, but developing into the 'true' church, part of God's unfolding story (Healy, 2000, p.7), or that the visible church will be judged and purified of unredeemed elements (e.g. Revelation 3 1-6). But sociologists may also comment on the identity of the church; not to evaluate it writes Martin (1988, p.43), but to reveal unquestioned assumptions that shape attitudes and behaviour.

The theoretical framework will need to take account of both the human and the divine face of the church, the ideal and the reality. The church is, as Schillebeeckx described it (1990), one reality in two languages, just as Christ has two natures, human and divine. The flawed human part is clearly as open to examination by social sciences as the practices of any other human community. This is particularly true of Church of England congregations, which are woven into the fabric of English society (Chapter Two, pp. 40/41). Congregations are "simultaneously theological and social/cultural" (Ward 2012, p. 2).

In this research I have examined the description of the congregation as a family, both as a metaphor and as a lived reality. Identification of the congregation as a family is based on a compound of Biblical and theological undergirding, observation and anecdote. The family is an entity examined by both theologians and sociologists and there is a shared language which makes conversation between sociologists and Christian theologians possible.

The local Anglican congregation is, therefore, both a social and a theological entity, characterised by the celebration of the Eucharist, with a missionary task and an identity which is not fixed, but which may respond to the

contemporary society in which it is situated. The perspectives of theology and sociology are both needed. In a piece of reflexive research for a professional doctorate, however, a third lens is required, the researcher herself. Rather than being an outsider, facilitating a critical dialogue between the disciplines of theology and social science, I am a partner in the conversation. During the meetings which have been arranged with church leaders I am a participant (albeit the convenor), not an observer. The 'insider/outsider' distinction is not straight forward (Stringer, 2002, p.3), but both faith and practice mean I am a regular worshipper in a Church of England congregation. My own experience, as a priest, as a professional adult educator and as a worshipping believer, is a further source of knowledge about local congregations.

The framework is constructed in triangular form, with each partner both contributing to and correcting the contribution of the other two. It will be necessary, therefore, to examine whether there is sufficient epistemological and methodological common ground between these partners for a mutually critical and enriching exchange to take place.

The Partners in the Research

The contribution of theology.

As a piece of practical theology, this research is situated within a theological context (Swinton, 2011), understanding theology as the knowledge of God. Discussions about the knowledge of God are often caught in circular arguments: how can one verify what can only be known by revelation? Yet the nature of God is highly significant as the contribution of theology to the theoretical framework is considered. Basil the Great, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus understood the Trinity in terms of the ways in which the Persons of the Godhead relate to each other, rather than by their distinguishing properties (Fiddes, 2000, pp.34-35). The chief consequence of asserting that God is three persons in relation is to say that God is essentially relational and so the world is not structured around logic, as Platonists and Neo-Platonists held, but relation (British Council of Churches, 1989 p.16). The persons

of the Godhead cannot be known except in the varied ways they interact with each other; their character is delineated by the relationship of mutual love and self-giving that they have. The invitation to humans to join in the movement of divine love comes from God and is made possible by God. "Humans know God only by participation in the Father-Son relationship through the Spirit, which allows us to cry *Abba, Father*" (Zizioulas, 2006, p.170). This is a relational epistemology, participating in the life of God through prayer, service and membership of a Christian fellowship, and so knowing God as loving, forgiving and life-enhancing (Fiddes, 2000). Neither the doctrine nor the experience has priority; the decision to participate precedes both. Consequently, because the relationship one has with God leads to a relationship with others, "to be and to be in relation becomes identical," so that relationship is itself a way of knowing (Zizioulas, 1985, p.88). There is no knowledge of the being of God, of ourselves or of each other as isolated individuals, to be acquired from objective observation. The theological voice is, therefore, not self-validating, but will be one that invites dialogue, even with non-theological disciplines. This is for two reasons.

The first is a theological perspective on the incapacity of humans to perceive reality. "Now we see through a glass darkly" as St Paul put it (1 Cor. 13:12). Reality does exist and is revealed, but cannot be fully known in this life. Knowledge of the nature of the church and especially of the congregation has drawn from a variety of sources, religious and secular. The traditions of the Anglican church have been formed from reflection on primary sources: Scripture and the Creeds of the church, the work of successive centuries of theologians and the lived experience of believers (L.R. App. One, pp 214-221). No one source has been deemed ultimately authoritative by the church because of the need to correct the errors and bias of each contributor. A negotiation has taken place between a positivist and a constructionist position. Dialogue between theologians and social scientists who adopt an approach of critical realism has proved possible (Cartledge, 2003, pp. 80-82).

The second reason is that 'theology' is here interpreted to include not only the primary texts and works of written theology, but also the thoughts, words and actions of members of Christian congregations. An expanded understanding of the nature of theology in recent years, including the use of the learning cycle by Green (2010), the exploration of 'Ordinary Theology' by Astley (2002), and of 'Implicit Theology' by Percy (2010) has enabled consideration of theology that is spoken and enacted by those without academic training. The relationship between these various 'voices' of theology is well expressed by Cameron, et al. (2010) who describe the 'normative' voice as the theological canon, the formal theological voice as those who have studied and written about that tradition, while the 'espoused' theology explores what the group says they believe and the 'operant' theology asks what the practices of this community discloses about its lived theological practice. In reporting the conversations that I have facilitated I have been particularly concerned to enable the voice of those who are usually silent, the 'ordinary theologians,' to be heard. I have examined the biblical and liturgical influences on this espoused and operant theology, noting that the outcome is a communal, rather than individualist perspective (Chapter Five, pp. 131-134).

Theologians are not, usually, likely to speak with one voice and this kind of research should, ideally, be a collaborative project (Healy, 2000 p.177). Theological discussion has taken place with the Adult Education National Network (7 June 2013), participants at the Faith in Research consultation (20 June 2013), and colleagues in the Ministry and Training department of the Chelmsford Diocese (Appendix Four). I presented a paper at the Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference in September 2014 and delivered a lecture on the study of congregations to the Chelmsford Theological Society in January 2015 (Chelmsford Cathedral, 2015). The diversity of responses I have received is a reminder that I will need to explore the polyvalency of the phenomena (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.13), noting that qualitative research is defined as a tool of

complexification (Swinton and Mowat, 2006 p.81). I will not only expect, but intentionally look for, internal contradictions within a faith stance.

Attention to the life of the Trinity has been shown to be the most fruitful area of theology in the development of an ecclesiology which can dialogue with those social sciences which examine humans in community (L.R. App. A, p.206). This theological perspective both illuminates the nature of relationships in congregations and indicates how they should be studied. The encounters between lay and ordained leaders will be examined in the light of a relational epistemology, that has been derived from the trinitarian character of God. This emphasises the necessity of relationship and participation as a source of knowledge and, consequently, I have actively sought collaborative partnerships.

The contribution of Self:

In order to investigate my own context and practice in working with the leadership of Church of England congregations it is necessary that I am a partner in the conversation, not an observer nor even only a facilitator of it. The work with local churches at the end of a ministerial vacancy will be analysed in the light of my own experience as an Interim Minister (Jordan, 2012), and present appointment as the Lay Development Adviser in an Anglican diocese. Much of the literature on Interim Ministry makes use of Family Systems Theory as a tool for analysing the life of a congregation (Nicholson, 1998, Dale Smith, 2009, Interim Ministry Network, 2010). My perception that the relationship between clergy and lay people is a systemic one, rather than solely the outcome of individual interactions, has strengthened since working with lay leaders for the past four years and is a theoretical undergirding of this research (Chapter Two, pp. 30-32).

It is usual for a qualitative researcher to take time to reflect on the effect of their own presence in the field and biases in writing up and presenting material. In this case, that presence was an integral part of the situation that was being studied. I was not, for example, concerned to guess what would have been

said if I was not present: the effect of my presence was at the heart of the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p.158). There is clearly a place for the non-believer and for the sympathetic commentator (Orsi, 2005 p.158) but the voice of the participant is a privileged one which knits together many of the strands of this framework. I am present as a participant in the trinitarian life of God, in the work of theological reflection and a participant in the practices of the church members with whom I have been meeting. It is to be expected that what is said and what is heard will be shaped by the faith of the participants and of the researcher. But this does not, of course, mean that the communication will be uncomplicated by misunderstanding, indeed, more so as common language is used differently (Stringer, 2002, p, 8). I have, therefore, paid attention to both epistemological and ethical dimensions of the place of self in the research.

I am seeking understanding, interpretation of events, experiences and perceptions, idiographic knowledge, rather than propositional truth. This kind of knowledge of faith and of congregations is of a different order to that acquired from study of formal theology: it is knowledge gained through encounter with others rather than from the faith tradition (Cameron, Reader and Slater, 2012, p.53). The faith stance of the researcher will be relevant in the construction of the theoretical framework. Both individuals and human communities may of course project many characteristics, desirable or otherwise, on to God and the church. Dialogue with other sources of knowledge is essential so that the danger of subjectivism is acknowledged and taken into account, but my own reactions and reflexivity about the church will be one source of knowledge about the reality that is present there (Moschella, 2008, p. 14). They will, indeed, be part of that reality.

Recognising the distortions that can result from interpretation from recording to transcript to analysis to writing, the practice of reflexivity is essential. I have noted the limits of my knowledge. I have also had to ask myself what version of events I would like to hear about, and the extent to which my position as a diocesan officer might persuade people to deliver the version they perceive I wish to hear. Having kept a research journal (Jordan, 2014) these reflections are

recorded at the end of each account of the meetings held in churches recorded in Chapter Five. My own theological stance is one which welcomes diversity within an understanding of the presence of God infusing the world as well as being present beyond space and time. I do not expect to be able to distinguish between sacred and secular sources of insight and wisdom. This attitude may have been communicated to other participants. A relational epistemology such as I have advocated will bear in mind the effect of that relationship on what can be known.

The perspective that I bring to this research will be that of a researching professional, not a professional researcher (Bennett and Graham, 2008 citing Bourner, Bowden and Laing, 2000, p. 33). My own faith, experience and observations shape that lens.

The contribution of the social sciences:

Social science has traditionally adopted a non-foundational epistemology, examining constructed meanings and interpretations of phenomena (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.73). Although there are, at first sight, irreconcilable epistemological differences, the field of practical theology has been distinguished by a willingness to find ways of formulating a correlative relationship between theology and the social sciences (Woodward and Pattison, 2000). The contribution of social sciences is likely to be welcomed for its own sake by those theologians who wish to privilege contextual, situated enquiry and the reflexivity of the researcher (Graham, 2013, p.152). The discipline of sociology, examining people in relationship with each other, is particularly useful in order to understand congregations, since it is especially appropriate to explore how humans relate to each other; what occurs between people, rather than what occurs inside them. Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory presumes that their objects and attributes can only be understood as part of the system and the character of the whole transcends the sum of its components (Rivett and Street, 2003, p.14). Family System theory, based on the work of Murray Bowen (Bowen Center, 2003), understands families as emotional systems impacted by the level of anxiety within the system and level of differentiation between members. This

theory, which examines the relationships between family members rather than their individual characteristics, has been applied through the work of Friedman (1985) to the life of congregations.

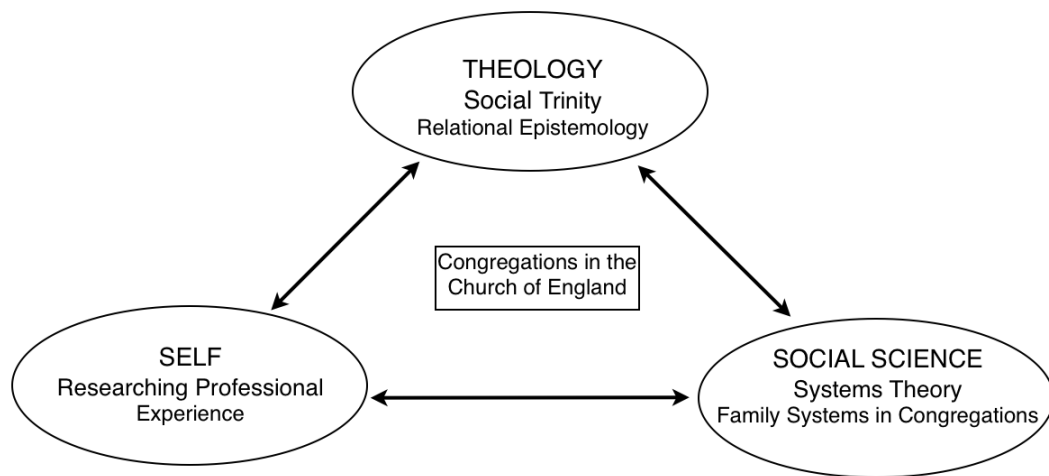
Both biblical and liturgical references to the family of God are frequent (Chapter Five, pp.131-134). The former popularity of 'family services,' frequent reference to the local church as a family and the habit of some parts of the Church of England of calling the priest 'Father,' and even, sometimes, 'Mother,' all contributes to the strength of this metaphor in minds and hearts. It appears that a family is what many local churches aspire to be.

Family Systems Theory itself has not been evidenced through research; it is a pragmatic approach to family breakdown. Cosgrove and Hatfield point out that most family therapists are themselves eclectic, using whatever within a variety of approaches they consider will achieve their aims (1994, p.6). The Network of Interim Ministers, consultants from the Alban Institute and the Bridgebuilders Organisation have all made extensive use of Family Systems Theory in their work with congregation members and leaders (The Alban Institute, 2014; Bridgebuilders, 2012; The Interim Ministry Network, 2010). Each has adopted different aspects of Bowen's theory. The Bridgebuilders Organisation, for example, emphasise the importance, for leaders, of differentiation from the family networks of the church in order to maintain their own and the church's health. The leader should work on their own reactions to events, rather than setting out to change others and, by changing themselves, alter the dynamic within the congregation's system. There is an absence of theological reflection on this model.² It would appear that a pragmatic methodology has been adopted by eclectic social work practitioners and then transferred to the life of congregations

² The identification of the church as a community, arising from relationship with the perichoretic trinitarian Godhead is has been examined by both African (Lartey, 1997; Nyengele, 2004) and Lutheran (Nessan, 2000) theologians. Familial language and family systems theory are found to be helpful in addressing issues of gender in the African setting (Nyengele, 2004), and directing attention to the interdependence of people in an individualistic Western culture (Lartey, 1997), but ultimately offering only an incomplete version of salvation (Nessan, 2000).

primarily because it appears to work. In this research I will be examining the value of familial language for articulating the hopes and realities of the lay-clergy relationship. Models of ordained leadership which mirror family relationships will be identified and the way in which congregation members construct the meaning of those relationships will be examined.

A model of the theoretical framework which identifies the main partners and their distinctive perspectives may now be drawn:



Conversations between Partners

This description of the three partners in the theoretical framework has already shown that there are both common themes and language, and creative tension shared between them. A family model and familial language, has, for example, been shown to be shared by sociologists describing relationships within congregations, by my own experience of working with congregations and in descriptions of the Godhead. The way that each partner may contribute to the conversation about relationships in congregations is discussed in the following chapter on methodology (Chapter Three, pp. 46-49). Relational epistemology is demonstrated in the recognition that it has not proved possible to describe each partner without outlining the way in which they will interact, since the part each plays in the framework is to some extent determined by their relations with each

other. There is a critical conversation between each voice, and each will be shown to be enriched by the relationship with the others.

The Conversation between Theology and Self

Zizioulas concluded from his study of the Cappadocian Fathers that personhood is the ultimate ontological reality, and that it is fundamentally relational (Fox, 2001, p.77). The self that is a partner in this critical conversation with theology and sociology is not an isolated individual but part of a network of interdependent relationships. Zizioulas offers an interpretation of social trinitarianism which both challenges what he sees as a particularly Western individualism, whilst accommodating recent, postmodern deconstruction of the concept of self (Collins, 2008). The self is neither autonomous and self-made, nor solely a social construction but in relation with God and with other humans. This has been evident in the course of this research as I have found that participating in dialogue with others is both necessary and stimulating and this has taken place through discussion, prayer and study. Engagement in discussion with ministerial colleagues and with fellow researchers has tested my ideas (Appendix Four) and reviewing the written theological resources has enabled conversation with Biblical and theological tradition.

Swinton encourages the Christian researcher to be reflexive in a mode which assumes that "theology is the normal and primary reflective dimension of the researcher's epistemological and methodological assumptions" (2011, p.84). In stark contrast to an attempted neutrality, he advocates prayer as central to the research process. Spiritual practice may indeed cultivate personal reflexivity. The Ignatian practice of the Examen, for example, has a significant convergence with the reflective practitioner's cycle of experience, reflection, judgement and action (Graham, 2013, p.173). There is increased awareness of the provisional, contextual and subjective nature of truth as perceived and presented, yet also of the unseen reality which faith affirms. Both subjectivity and objectivity are respected.

A theology of the social Trinity informs my own identity: "the church must be conceived as the place where man (*sic*) can get a taste of his eternal eschatological destiny which is communion in God's very life" (Zizioulas, 1991, p.28). This "eschatological destiny" of participation is foreshadowed in worship (Ford and Hardy, 1999). The theology of the social Trinity also affirms an especially close relationship with other members of the Body of Christ, the visible church and the communion of saints of the past (1 Corinthians, 12: 12). (The Body of Christ is itself a systemic image, used to describe both the universal and the local church. I have not, though, further explored this language as it is less amenable to conversation with the social sciences than family and not the common language of lay people). As an insider I have a privileged opportunity to enable others to articulate their espoused and operant theology. I can observe the practices of the Christian community and the less than articulate expressions of faith and make connection with formal and normative theology. Green describes this work of finding relationships as the work of the "conventional theologian" (2010, p.99). This is not only of benefit to the individuals and communities concerned, but expands understanding of the nature of theology, theology as performed and experienced.

The interaction between theology and self, based on participation and relationship, is thus both corrective and creative. It indicates the manner in which the research will be carried out, a process involving both prayer and theological reflection, while being aware of my own identity as one sharing membership of God's family with those who are the focus of my research.

The conversation between Self and Social Science

In a society marked by globalisation there have been radical transformations in the understanding of self. The disciplines of sociology and psychology may now be more formative than the wisdom and legacy of elders (Giddens, 1991, p.54). The conversation between self and the social sciences will be a necessary one.

As explained, I will work with an understanding of myself as a person in relationship with others and grounded in God. This "ecclesial self" (Grenz 2001) contrasts with the autonomous unitary self of modernity which has itself given way to the "postmodern" self with constantly changing relations in which there is no personal identity distinct from the world (Grenz, 2001). This social identity is a highly unstable self, whereas the self which is correlative to the social Trinity has a source of authenticity apart from its own being. The comparison between my own faith stance and the social sciences has clarified this perspective.

Researching my own practice, I am observing myself as a convenor and facilitator³ of encounters between laity and clergy as much as observing what is said and done at the meetings. I may hope that I am enabling church leaders and ministers to express their beliefs, but I am aware that these may be co-constructed between the participants and me for the purposes of research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The experience of ethnographers, especially those examining their own context, is a valuable aid to effective reflexivity. The difficulties of 'impression management', (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, 83) and the avoidance of 'mutual transference' (Willis, 1990, p.90) might suggest that the fieldworker can only ever study the relation between the field and him/herself, not the field itself (Rosaldo, 1986). But some ethnographers affirm that participation and relationship are the only ways of knowing: "the hero of science who gained control through disengagement has to be replaced by a scholar who achieves understanding by way of involvement" (Hastrup, 1995, p.172). It is not possible to stand apart from the situation to be researched when these are people whose care is part of the professional responsibility which is to be examined.

The experience of social scientists suggests a variety of aids to reflexivity, such as teamwork in the collaborative testing of theory and perception with

³ I am using this term as one would in adult education, as one who encourages the conversation - and hence learning - of others.

others in the field, self-analysis in exploring the areas of resistance and disinterest and keeping a diary to reveal issues of identity and allegiance (Okely, 1996, p.34). Knowledge of the complexity of our own lives may guard against generalising and simplifying the lives of others (Cohen, 1992).

I have reflected on my own interest in the field of clergy-lay relationships and the extent to which I will be looking for those who agree or disagree with my position (Chapter One pp. 7-9). I have had to be aware of my own preconceptions as I met the participants in the research, as I gathered data, as I analysed it, and as I write up and present it. A research journal has been used to compare what I expected to find with what was heard and seen (Jordan, 2014, pp.1-9, Elliott, 2005, p.158).

My own experience and the reactions to my presence will be a source of knowledge about the local church situation. The Family Systems therapist understands that they are a part of the family system they are working to heal, affecting its dynamics through the transferences and projections of the family members and through the roles taken on by therapist in relation to each of its members (Walrond-Skinner, 1976, p.30). In an analogous way, the researcher is seen as part of the congregation's system, for a short time affecting the way that it sees itself. I will try to model a way of engaging in a conversation between the lay and ordained leaders about the difficult issues of their roles and responsibilities. I am reminded, however, that the knowledge gathered will be specific and provisional, possibly indicative of wider practice, but far from universal. The interaction of the perspectives of self and the social sciences will be on the basis on appreciation of the communal self and the practice of reflexivity.

The conversation between Social Science and Theology

Since attention is to be paid to speech and practice as well as to authoritative texts and theological literature (Cameron, et al, 2010) the tools and methodologies of the social sciences will be required as well as interpretation from the Christian tradition.

Theology and the social sciences may share some common ground. Insights from psychology will illuminate the theological understanding of flawed human nature, while an interpretation of the congregation as the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12) and as a family (Friedman, 1985) is consistent with observing the congregation as a system. The congregation has a distinctive relationship to space and time, place and history, through which it self-identifies, just as a family does (McGrath, 2012, p.120). In the Eucharist the past death of Christ is remembered and the future heavenly banquet anticipated. The congregation is united in communion with the saints of the past and anticipates the final gathering of all God's people: "so that we, in the company of all the saints, may praise and glorify you forever" (Church of England, 2000, p. 190). This existence in time and space is realised in the practices of the congregation as well, as candles are lit in remembrance, intercessions are made for those absent because of illness or distance and prayers for the future are made. All these practices mirror those of an extended family, as past family members can have a great influence on present ones, while the birth of children is celebrated as the continuation of the family name and genes.

The theology of the communal self has itself gained attention at a time when other disciplines are exploring a relational human ontology (The John Templeton Foundation, 2005). Theologians of the social Trinity have explored the concept of the 'ecclesial' self, the self that exists in its relations transformed by the power of the Spirit in community (Grenz, 2001). They also assert that humans are creatures who form bonds, who cannot be alone without a sense of incompleteness. Studying the activity and attitudes of humans in society, there is much to learn about congregations through dialogue with the social sciences. But at the same time secular social theories are challenged by the witness of spiritual practices and beliefs. Family Systems Theory is a good example of this. Positing an interpretation of individual behaviour as necessarily influenced by family relationships, some have complained that an "irrational mysticism" has developed about the concept of family (Rivett and Street, 2003, p.29). Yet such a super-

natural quality is precisely what is ascribed to Christian believers, as members of the 'Body of Christ' (1 Corinthians.12.13). The congregation has an identity which is greater than the sum of its parts and, in this sense, presents a more apparent system than does the birth-family. The description of the church as family, repeated in word and act in liturgy and pastoral care, is a coherent explanation of what is observed. Family Systems Theory has been used to analyse congregations and to guide leaders, but rarely itself subject to theological examination in the churches which use it most. Only a dialogue with the Biblical and theological use of family language will demonstrate whether Bowen's theories, especially that of differentiation, being both distant and connected with the congregation, is consonant with Christian tradition and practice. Familial language has been applied to the life of a congregation as a theological reality, as an example of an emotional system and as the aspiration of the congregation. Careful attention must be paid to this complex use of language, but its common vocabulary may open the way for dialogue between social scientists and theologians about the communal self.

The use of qualitative and quantitative research methods has already proved useful to those investigating the life of the church. The 'sociological theology' pioneered by Robin Gill employs both empirical and quantitative study (Gill, 2012a; Gill, 2012b; Gill, 2013). He asserts both scepticism about the extent to which human beings can receive revelation without constructing their own meaning and optimism that God might be revealed through apparently secular sources. Much practical theology, indeed, has been distinguished by its willingness to dialogue with the social sciences and, with varying degrees of accommodation, practical theologians have found ways of formulating a correlative relationship between social sciences and theology (Lynch and Pattison, 2005). But the objection of members of the Radical Orthodoxy School has sharpened the debate, focussing attention on the use of sociology, a discipline that Milbank says, is "a secular policing of the sublime," excluding and limiting all things religious (2005, p.106). Theology must not, he asserts, give way to any

other discipline in describing the reality of our lives. Milbank accuses German political theologians and Latin American liberation theologians of accepting Marxism as the dominant discourse, disclosing the essence of human ontology (2005, p.207). Ethnographers of the church such as Ward and Scharen respond that to understand the church we should view it as being simultaneously theological and social/ cultural (Ward, 2012, p.2). Ward and Scharen's aim is not a correlation between Christian theology and a social description, as all things are "in Christ;" this is a dialogue, a conversation held together in the one in whom all things have their origin (2012, p.3). They reject correlational models of the relationship between theology and social sciences, such as those of Browning (1991) and van der Ven (1998) as they are seen to imply a source of knowledge separate from God. All discourse, it is claimed, should be fundamentally theological (Hegstad, 2012 p.38). The aim is to produce an ecclesiology "from below" examining the practices of the church (Nieman and Haight, 2012, 9). Much, therefore, depends on how 'theology' is understood. Theology which is 'done' rather than studied, (Green, 2010) more accurately reflects beliefs and practices *constructed* to negotiate life than theology which is received as revelation. The absolute distinction between a positivist and constructionist paradigm is here hard to maintain.

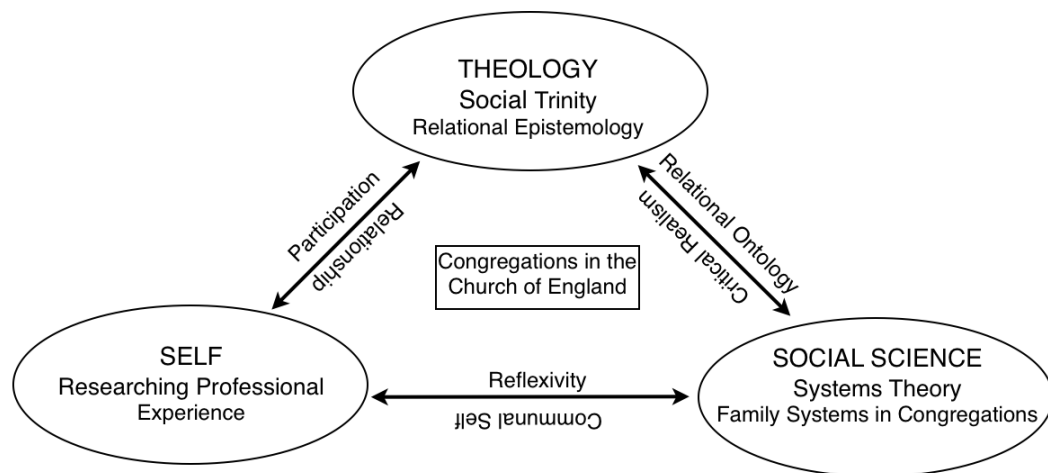
The same phenomena can, indeed, be interpreted differently according to one's assumptive framework. As noted above, the review of the literature on ecclesiology concluded that the four sources of revelation envisaged by Wesley: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience, had each had influence (The Methodist Church, 2012). It is, though, only the perspective of faith that sees these as sources of revelation: they may also be viewed as constructions of reality even while the practices themselves appear identical to the observer. Christian researchers have thus found it possible to use the tools of psychology and sociology, while proceeding as if there were a transcendent determinant of human behaviour (Gill, 1975, p.29), just as other social scientists are now expected to acknowledge their assumptive framework (Gadamer, 2004).

Swinton concludes from Gadamer's argument that the engagement of the researcher within the research should be declared and that the Christian researcher should be wary of research that makes sense without reference to God (2011, p.84). His preferred metaphor for the relation between theology and social sciences is hospitality, rather than correlation, arguing that theological reflection should not always be a second order activity, occurring after the event has been recorded and analysed according to a non-theological paradigm (2011, p.91). It has, however, been shown that an examination of the local congregation as a family may proceed on the basis of a shared understanding of relational ontology and an epistemology of critical realism. The theological perspective both precedes and supports the sociological perspective of a relational community, while the latter may critique unquestioned assumptions about the nature of the church (Martin, 1988, p.43).

Church of England congregations have a particular character which means that it is especially appropriate that the perspectives of both theology and the social sciences are employed to explore their nature. The Church of England, as established by the Elizabethan Settlement, was intended to be the church for the nation, one to which all the Queen's subjects could attend, to demonstrate their loyalty to her (MacCulloch, 2000). As well as containing both Reformed and Catholic elements in its theology and practice, it is also part of the government and social fabric of the country. This is apparent at many levels: its senior bishops sit in the House of Lords, while all residents have rights to baptism, weddings and burial in their local parish and churchyard. Church schools, founded by the church, but now state run, may still require church attendance as part of their admissions policy. All services held in church must be public: no-one is barred from attending. (One of the Churchwardens' duties is to maintain order). As a consequence of all this the congregation may, at any time, contain parents wishing to have their child baptised or attend a church school, couples registering an interest in the church and so acquiring the right to be married there, families and friends of those recently buried or at the anniversary of death, and visitors with little or no

previous experience of church. Special services will take place during the year to mark Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day and the church may also be the venue for civic services, and military, para-military and young peoples' uniformed groups. Any description of the congregation which fails to pay attention to the church's position in secular society will be inadequate. The voices of both theology and the social sciences will be needed in this conversation.

In the end it is not entirely possible to discuss the dialogue between any two of the partners in this conversation without referring to the third. A two dimensional framework is struggling to describe a conversation that can happen between myself and theological and sociological theories, and in real life, as lay and ordained leaders are invited by me to voice their understanding of the relationship between them. The framework for that conversation, including the partners' distinctive perspectives and the manner of their interaction, will look like this:



Summary:

This chapter set out to examine how the relationship between ordained and lay leaders could be examined. The value of the perspectives of theology, self and the social sciences has been justified, as the contribution of each has been examined. It has been shown that the theme of family is present in each and that this relational entity, and the language associated with it, will facilitate the conversation between these partners in the research.

The theoretical framework has established that the relational ontology that has been explored, both through trinitarian theology and theories of the social self, requires a relational epistemology. This holds that truth is perceived in community, and the researcher is one of the participants in the research. Whether a theological or sociological paradigm is adopted, and whether truth seen as revealed or constructed, both theologians and social scientists accept that it will be interpreted through human senses and in less than perfect shape. Study of the local congregation, envisaged as both a human and a theological community, requires a robust theoretical framework, each partner acting as a critical corrective to the other. This relational epistemology indicates a method of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p.23) which will be described in Chapter Three.

Chapter 3

Research Strategy and Methods

Introduction

This chapter will demonstrate how the research strategy and resulting methodology have been derived from the theoretical framework described in Chapter Two and tested in a pilot project. The theoretical framework has been designed to enable a conversation to take place between my own ministerial experience of fieldwork carried out with local churches at the end of a ministerial vacancy, with theologians working with an understanding of the church as an expression of the relationships of the Trinity, and with Family Systems Theory. I have identified the local congregation as a community whose identity may be described in both theological and sociological terms and, consequently, whose study requires a relational epistemology.

After describing the research process in this chapter, the interaction between the perspectives of the self, social sciences and theology is explained and exemplified by analysis of the pilot project. I concluded from this methodological work that narrative analysis and conversation analysis were the appropriate tools to employ, as, combined with attention to the use of familial language, they capture the content and process of the meetings held with lay and ordained leaders. The chapter concludes with an account of the reflective process I followed and the steps I have taken to engage in theological dialogue with colleagues and fellow researchers.

The research process: contact with people, arrangements for meeting.

The leadership of five local churches were approached to take part in this research. These had been identified by the respective Area Bishop; chosen because they were at the end of a ministerial vacancy, rather than any selection based on age, gender or other characteristics of the participants, or the church.

There was considerable diversity represented in each of these areas, as described in Chapter Four (p.68).

The pattern of research planned was that a meeting was arranged with the leadership of each church, which was some combination of Churchwardens, parish representatives and licensed ministers. Future hopes and expectations were discussed, the aim being to encourage a conversation between the participants. The newly appointed priest, at a separate meeting, was also encouraged to consider these matters. No attempt was made to hold one meeting prior to the other. Within six weeks of the licensing of a new priest a meeting was held with both parties together to share the experience and reflect on the direction of future discussions. Within six months a further meeting was held, or a telephone conversation was made, with the newly appointed Vicar.

At the meeting with the lay leaders I asked for a description of the process of drawing up the parish profile and the role description, enquiring what came easily and what was contested. Asking what they would like to see changed in the church and what remain the same indicated their understanding of the effect of a new ordained leader and the limits of his or her influence. I asked what relationship they would like to exist with the new Incumbent. I was usually able to build on their own description of the church as a family to enquire about further awareness of the church as a family, in a theological, sociological and, occasionally, literal, sense.

At the meeting with the newly-appointed minister I asked about his or her impressions of the church and experience of the appointment process. This was followed by a question about what further they would like to know about the situation there and what they would like the congregation to know about them. I was listening for indications of what was important to them as they thought about leadership and relationships with the lay leaders. The clergy were asked if they were familiar with some of the attitudes advocated by Friedman for effective leadership of the church family: that is, a non-anxious presence, changing the

system by changing oneself, being self-differentiated, being non-anxious and being present with those one is leading (1985, p. 228). At the end of each of these meetings I asked for agreement on what could be communicated at the joint meeting.

At this joint meeting I began by asking what each thought the effect of the appointment process had been. I contributed what I had heard about past and present hopes in each meeting and asked if this was accurate. This gave an opportunity for the minister and lay leaders to talk about what had taken place in the meetings and share information with those not there. I included anything that had been said about family-type relationships in the church and listened to the conversation that resulted. At the end of the meeting, after thanking the participants for assisting me, I asked what effect the process had had on them.

The aim of the call to the ordained minister six months after the date of their licensing was to review the process of induction in the new situation by recalling the pre- and post-licensing meetings, reflecting on the effect of those conversations in building relationships in subsequent months and comparing, for those who had been involved in previous appointments, this process with previous experience(s). I asked which part or parts of the process of meeting me and of meeting the church leadership has proved most memorable, looking for specific examples. I then enquired if any of the topics raised at the meeting with the church leadership were a surprise and if any of those topics been raised since that meeting, in formal or informal ways. I had to limit calls to members of the clergy because of the restraints of time.

Each of the meetings was recorded, a transcript written up within a week and annotated with notes on the background to the meetings. This included the ease or otherwise of arranging them, the location, and the non-verbal phenomena that were observed. Social and cultural differences between the churches and the previous experiences of ministerial vacancies shared by lay and ordained participants were also noted.

In order to develop and maintain the "continual reflexive awareness" that is needed for reflection on one's own practice (Davies 1999: p.21), reflections in the research journal recorded the impact of my own background, and expectations (Jordan 2014, pp.1-9). I noted how I responded to what was said and the effect this had on my mood and judgement of the church's health. I noted my reactions to individuals and whether I felt sympathetic to them or not. I recorded my awareness of reactions to me in my role as a diocesan officer and to the effect of my disclosure that I was ordained.

Theoretical basis for methodology

The self, social sciences and theology do not only offer three distinguishable perspectives on the life of the local congregation and attitudes towards leadership of it. In addition, it is the interaction between them that is most illuminative and produces insights beyond what each could deliver in their own right (Chapter Two, p. 42). Although the relationship of the social sciences and of theology is contentious, the theoretical framework has demonstrated that elements of each have sufficient linguistic, epistemological and methodological common ground for a mutually critical and enriching exchange. The theological voice is one which has a Trinitarian understanding of God, emphasising participation in the Godhead, and values the operant and espoused theology of the congregation. The sociological voice is one which illuminates a systemic understanding of community and aids the researcher's own reflexivity. Accepting the equal role of the self in the research project facilitates dialogue between the social sciences and theology by focussing attention on the participation of the researcher in life of the Trinity, and so of the church, and of participation in the family-like system of the local congregation. Such a relational epistemology undergirds a framework that enables research to be undertaken by an insider.

The methodology to be employed needs to follow from the epistemological assumptions made. Having adopted a relational epistemology and seeking insight from the three perspectives of theology, social sciences and self, in relation with each other, I am navigating between a positivist and a constructivist

position. I am working with an understanding of God as the guarantor of reality, both revealed to and constructed by humans in relationship with each other.

The interaction between theology and self emphasises the significance of my own participation in these faith communities, even though this led to action unusual in academic research. I judged it appropriate at times, for example, to pray with the individuals and groups who had agreed to participate in the project, both because it is my own practice and because communication happens in action as well as words. My identity as a researcher cannot be separated from what theological sources inform me is my identity as a believer, an 'ecclesial self' (Grenz, 2001). Personal self-awareness has, therefore, been crucial. Since the voice of my own experience and reflection is a key partner in this research I have employed tools of reflective practice from both theologians and qualitative researchers. Theological tradition, for example, encourages the cultivation of personal reflexivity. The Ignatian practice of the Examen (Loyola Press, 2013) has facilitated personal reflection on emotional reactions to the data collected. I have had to be aware of my own pre-conceptions as I first communicated with participants, as I gathered data, as I analysed it and, and as I wrote up and presented it.

The interaction between social sciences and self indicates the extent to which 'I' am a social self, formed by the communities in which I participate. I have been researching my own practice as a diocesan officer, concerned to improve relationships between lay church members and clergy. I have been examining whether a facilitated conversation about models of leadership at an early stage in the newly appointed minister's term of office will assist in this. So my role in the meetings has not been as an interviewer, but as a catalyst of conversations between others. I have not expected the participants in these conversations to express carefully prepared ideas, but to develop their own understanding as they recount their stories (Ganzevoort, 2011). I have assumed, as do other narrative researchers, that the narratives recounted to me had a purpose, whether to establish community between those who shared in the story, to establish groups

and sub-groups in the larger group, or to communicate through me to some unseen authority such as a Bishop. Since I am interested in the active negotiation of reality with an audience, as the participants articulate their espoused theologies, rather than direct representation of an objective reality, this is less of a problem than it would be for positivist researchers. I have been aware, whilst meeting lay and ordained leaders of the effect of my own presence and I have used a research journal after the research meeting to compare what I expected to hear and see with what was seen and heard (Jordan, 2014, pp.1-9). Awareness of the multiplicity of possible readings has aided this reflexivity and I have recorded, for each meeting: my response to the narrative, the active subject who is telling the story, the respondent's relationship with family and close friends and the broader social and cultural context of respondent (Mauther and Doucet, 2005, p. 158).

The interaction between theology and the social sciences enables an integrated description of the local church as a family, the place where the two natures of the church are well expressed. Family Systems Theory, though applied to the church, has not previously been brought into dialogue with Biblical material and theologians of the relational Trinity. The variety of ways in which familial language was used was noted. I listened for the literal use of familial language to describe blood relationship in the congregation and the extension of that language to honorary members of families. I listened for the use of familial language as a metaphor, describing emotional relationships and I listened for a Biblical and theological understanding of the church as God's family. Examination of the operant and espoused theologies through which church members express their own perspectives has facilitated the dialogue between Family Systems Theory and biblical and theological sources, noting that church members are as likely to express their beliefs in their behaviours as in words. Tanner warns that some theologians may be too purist about what is a Christian practice: practices are constituted by "ambiguity, inconsistency and open-endedness" (2002, p. 232).

The perspective of the social sciences will be a necessary corrective to any such blinkered vision.

The narratives told and conversations that I facilitated will be analysed for evidence of the use, by the ordained and lay leaders, of the model of the family and of relational ontology to describe the relationships between clergy and lay people. This is a piece of qualitative research, that "captures individual views more nearly" and is "more likely to be confronted with the constraints of everyday life" (Denzin and Lincoln 2013, p.19). While investigating the understanding of the relationship between ordained and lay people, respect for the participants in research will mean attention to their responses, open questions and a guided conversation, rather than a pre-arranged interview schedule. The tools of narrative and conversation analysis, described below, have been employed to enable this.

The relational ontology, expressed in both a theological understanding of the communal self and the description of the congregation as a system, indicates a relational epistemology: an expectation that knowledge will be discovered and received when in relationship with others. Contacting the newly appointed priest within six months of the initial meetings enabled them to reflect on the effectiveness of the guided conversations in improving that relationship and so become co-researchers. (Feedback from the lay participants would, of course, have been highly desirable, but did not prove possible within the constraints of the research time-table).

The Pilot Church St Peter

Context

St Peter is an evangelical parish, in a poor urban setting. Rev P. describes himself as an open Evangelical. He has come from outside the Diocese and was not previously known to any in the church.

Narrative of research

At the suggestion of the Area Bishop I sent emails to the Churchwardens and to Rev P. Rev P. contacted one Warden to check if this was acceptable to them before replying to me.

I met the church leaders first; the Wardens with the parish representatives and a pastoral assistant, and then with Rev P. The first meeting took place in the church, organised by one of the Wardens, the second at the vicarage. Each meeting took place in a relaxed manner. I had not had previous contact with any of the lay leaders, who appeared to assume I was primarily interested in improving the diocese's appointment processes rather than carrying out personal research. I found that Rev P. was wishing to undertake postgraduate research himself and he was glad to assist me.

Soon after we met, however, my mother died and when I was able to resume study and contact the church for a follow up meeting with the church leaders and Rev P. together I heard that he had contracted a chronic disease which meant that he had suspended all work. By the time that he had returned to work I had begun work with the other parishes and decided not to contact St Peter's to complete the pilot. The two meetings that had taken place had already confirmed the viability of the project. The lay leaders were keen to participate in anything that improved the diocesan practice at the time of appointment and the newly appointed minister was glad of the opportunity to talk about his future responsibilities. I found that both my outline questions to guide the conversation created room for narrative and dialogue and that the apparatus that I had chosen for recording the meeting worked well and unobtrusively.

Lessons learned

The pilot project that was carried out clarified the nature of the methods to be used in analysis of the meetings which I had facilitated between ordained and lay leaders of the local churches. I noted eagerness to tell me some things: for example, that the church was acting together, that the choice of minister was unanimous, that the church had distinctive needs. I identified much of the

recorded dialogue as narrative, largely addressed to me, and the remainder as conversation, both with me and with other participants. Consequently the tools of narrative and of conversation analysis have been used to enable me to listen to the participants' own description of the nature of their congregation and their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of leadership. .

The Methods of Analysis

The theoretical framework for this research has been designed to enable the research question to be addressed:

How can the period immediately after the arrival of a new minister and during the period of induction be best used as a significant moment to improve the quality of the relationship between lay leaders and the newly appointed priest?

In order to investigate the value of the meetings held with the newly appointed minister and the church leaders the transcripts of the meetings have been analysed so as to answer the following the questions:

What have these meetings permitted the participants to say to each other, and

What have these meetings revealed about clergy-lay relationships at the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy?

The first of these questions focuses on the process of the meetings. It enquires whether these facilitated encounters have enabled the participants to express their thoughts to themselves, and to each other, in a way that that has promoted the development of a good working relationship between clergy and lay people. In this I am examining my own professional work as a diocesan officer, concerned to nurture good relationships between lay and ordained ministers.

The second of these questions concentrates on what has been expressed, explicitly and implicitly about the understanding of the roles and expectations clergy and lay people have of each other. Both words and practice are examined. I

have been particularly interested in the behaviour of the priest in the period between moving into the parish and being licensed and what is expected of him or her by the church leaders. I see this as indicative of the understanding of their embedded theologies of priesthood and of the change in relationship that accompanies the authority conferred by a Bishop's licence. I noted significant agreement between lay and ordained leaders in the behaviour expected. In four of the parishes I visited, however, there was considerable divergence between the lay and ordained leaders of the congregation in talk about the nature of the congregation and the role of the priest. As I listened to the dialogue between priest and lay leaders and particularly as I heard the former correct the latter, I interpreted the conversation as one between 'ordinary' and 'academic' theology (Astley, 2002). This decision was based on both a reaction to the nature of what I heard and a conscious choice: if those without formal theological training were expressing their own theology of ministry and priesthood, I wanted to ensure they were not silenced. In this I am fulfilling part of my job description as Lay Development Adviser in the Diocese of Chelmsford: to be an articulate spokesperson for lay ministry and leadership. It is apparent, however, that a different account of the conversations could have emerged if I had chosen a different schema. If I continued with my original intention, for example, to examine the four voices of theology expressed during the conversations it is possible that I would have been more likely to find more common ground between lay and ordained leaders. Since I have retained the recordings of the conversations such a future examination is possible.

I have presented the findings for each church as a unit, rather than comparing each meeting with the equivalent in another church. This reflects the presupposition that each local church should be understood as a system, with distinct and mutual interaction.

I did not begin by adopting a particular research method by which to structure these encounters, but by determining the nature of my professional practice and selected an eclectic mix of methods that best suited analysis of it.

The process of analysis chosen was thus closely related to the nature of the research activity, which was a trial of a series of meetings, designed to enable conversation about expectations of leadership in a local church setting. These were neither interviews, though they took the form of semi-structured questions, nor focus groups, though people were gathered to share thoughts on a topic. Neither was the research activity an example of action research, as the participants were not actively engaged in a cyclical process of feedback, evaluation and further research (Denscombe, 2010. pp 93-105). Though these local church groups resemble, at first sight, case studies, they were not selected on the basis of any attribute except that the church was at the appropriate time in the selection process (Denscombe, 2010, p.55). They were structured conversations, in which I as the researcher was both observer and facilitator.

Though not an interview, case study or focus group, the interaction of the group and observation of it certainly resembled each and it is, indeed, possible that many of the respondents thought it was one of these activities, since this is what they might expect when asked to participate in research. The analysis of them, therefore, drew from the literature on interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), focus groups (Cartledge, 2010) and case studies (Denscombe 2010) in order to assemble a pattern of analysis that would examine the work I had carried out.

The transcripts of meetings were not examined by thematising words or phrases. Each church was treated as a unit, with systemic relationships, the words spoken in each context examined, rather than across interviews. In this way the distinctive characteristics of each local community are honoured, and the differences in language and behaviour between them noted. Confusion caused when the same word or phrase is used by different people to mean different things was thus avoided. (One recurring example was the word 'diocese' which could mean the geographical area, the senior leadership, the central diocesan office or the administrative machinery). The practices of church members and the

minister between the time of appointment and the licensing, such as care of the vicarage, were recorded as revealing attitudes towards church leadership.

The examination of process, that is, what these meetings have permitted the participants to say to each other, was carried out at each stage of the research, as I was particularly interested in how the relationships developed through the meetings. Before the licensing service the memories of the appointment process included stories about the experience of vacancy, the interview procedure and the planning of the service. These were later analysed as narrative. Reactions to the introduction of key concepts about family systems were analysed as conversation. After the licensing service memories of the service were analysed as narrative. I reported back what I had heard from each party, and analysed the resulting dialogue as conversation. A facilitated discussion of family systems, as a vocabulary for discussion of lay clergy relationship took place and was analysed as conversation. The call to the priest after six months contained memories of the pre and post licensing meetings which were analysed as narrative. A discussion then took place reflecting on the effect of those conversations in building relationships and comparing, for those who had been involved in previous appointments, this process of building relationships with previous experience(s). This was analysed as conversation.

The content of each meeting, which demonstrated what these meetings have revealed about clergy-lay relationships at the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy, was examined according to the nature of the pattern of speech. The stories of the appointment were analysed as narrative, identifying syntax used, and the subject and intended audience. Conversations amongst those present were analysed for adjacency pairing and the use of models to describe the lay-clergy relationship. I noted the themes of Family Systems Theory, distinguishing between those explicitly introduced, such as interdependence and nuclear family relationships reflected in church, and those used spontaneously. Practice and attitudes that reinforce, question or initiate ways of relating have also been noted.

Analysis of Narrative

The first question to both the group of church leaders and to the priest was to ask them what had gone well, and not so well, in the interview process and the licensing service. This was intended to be an 'easy' opening question, factual rather than conceptual (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). It proved to be a topic on which the participants were more than ready to talk and, indeed, on a couple of occasions discussion had to be curtailed. The willingness of participants to tell their collective stories affirms the significance of such narratives and suggested the use of narrative inquiry (Elliot, 2005) in analysis of this part of the meeting. The aim of such analysis is not to discover what happened in an objective sense, but how narrators experienced and interpreted it. The interviewer/interviewee relationship is changed to one of narrator and listener. Both the content of the narrative and the effect of telling these stories were significant.

Ganzevoort describes four dimensions of narrative analysis of the story's configuration: structure, perspective, tone and role assignment (2011). It is the last of these, role assignment, which concerns the roles ascribed between lay and ordained members of the church. The transcripts were examined for examples of stories and language which described those roles. What roles would each like the other to play? Mutually dissonant roles, such as the priest wishing to act as a shepherd to his or her flock, whilst the members of the congregation described themselves as part of a family were noted. Treating a narrative as a construction of reality, as well as a record of it (Chase, 2008, p. 56) repetition of phrases or short narratives in any of the subsequent interviews were identified. These might indicate that the participants had learned ways of articulating their thoughts and experiences through the experience of the research meetings. Each narrator's linguistic practices, such as word choice, repetition, hesitation and laughter were noted (Chase, 2008, p.57).

The audience for these stories was significant (Ganzevoort, 2010). In the meetings with the church leaders and, after the licensing, with the church leaders and the new minister there was information and perspectives that had not been

shared in that way, with those listeners, before. Sometimes I was the intended audience, both as the one carrying out research and as a representative of the diocesan establishment, but at others the remarks were intended for others in the room. Rehearsing the story of the church brought the participants together in a common narrative and also indicated how the story should continue in the future. For example, at St Peter's it was apparent that a past priest had so firmly emphasised the importance of missionary giving that this was a non-negotiable element of the church's identity and must be retained in the future. Calling the clergy six months after the initial meeting provided one opportunity to ask about their understanding of the effect of telling those stories.

Analysis of Conversation

Following the narrative of the appointment process, the remainder of the meetings were comprised of shorter responses during semi-structured conversations. The framework of questions and topics to be raised was supplemented by the participants' own agendas. I have used the methods of conversation analysis to examine both responses to questions and the conversation which took place between participants.

Conversation analysis asserts that form, especially the adjacency pair, is at the heart of conversation (Perakyla and Ruusuvuori, 2013, p.287). Adjacency pairs are the habitual sequences and common responses that make conversation flow, and demonstrate that one has understood the preceding turn of the speaker, and so indicate the quality of relationship with that person. Noting these pairs enabled assessment of the participant's understanding of the topics which were introduced and their understanding of each other's position. Association of ideas and *non sequiturs* were equally of interest.

The script of the meeting at the pilot church of St Peter exemplified this. For example, when one participant said: "we're a family church and make people feel welcome" another added: "We are a strong church family, supportive of one another." Welcome and support were paired with 'family.' There were also intriguing pairings: "Well it's good when you've got a problem and you can talk to

the minister and call him out just like an ordinary man and talk to him just like talking to Jesus" might indicate some internal contradictions in the lay leaders' attitude the ordained leadership.

The second way in which the techniques of conversation analysis were used was in observation of the subject of each speech, an element of the syntax of the conversation (Ganzevoort, 2010). The choice of first, second or third person may, of course, be the result of unconscious habit, but may also indicate a sense of agency or passivity in the process of making decisions about a new priest. I noted the extent to which the lay leadership expressed a belief that they were able to influence the appointment of an ordained minister, comparing this usage with that indicating a lack of agency. The newly ordained minister's choice of subject was also noted and then examined to see whether, in context, it represented a sense of individual responsibility, (first person), reliance on the external authority of the diocese, (third person) or a developing sense of identity with the congregation and local leadership, (first person, plural). The validity of this examination was confirmed when I heard Rev P. being open about his relief at being able to speak in first person again after the restrictions of being a curate.

Thus each of the meetings held contained a mixture of narrative and conversation. As well as methods of narrative analysis and conversation analysis the transcripts were also examined for the occurrence of key concepts from the theoretical framework. Familial language was noted at the meetings prior to licensing and inquiry made about how it had been applied to the particular congregation. Reactions to this were a significant part of the later conversation. The theology of a communal self was not explicitly introduced, but the transcripts examined to see whether the participants' speech indicated that this understanding of the life of a congregation was one that was already present.

The experience of the pilot church confirmed that familial language was used to describe ordained leadership and the local church. The parish representatives wanted to ask about the priest's family, knowing from experience

how influential the relationship between ministers and their spouses was in the parish. They were frustrated by an appointment process that prevented this. The church leaders identified the label 'elder brother' as a very satisfactory way of describing the 'first amongst equals' kind of relationship that they wished to have. When, however, I shared this with the new minister he reacted adversely, not to the role but to the label - his experience with his own elder brother had not been good. This confirmed Friedman's insights (1985) about family relationship in the minister's own life being significant, but I did not have the opportunity to follow this up in a further meeting. I noted that Rev P.'s spouse was often referred to and that the need of the priest's family for a church with youth work was a strong reason for his choice of this church. The participants were keen to emphasise the family-like nature of the church and found it hard to handle relationships in which there are guidelines derived from other situations: the example given was of a set of boundaries about visiting a 'vulnerable adult,' whom they saw as a member of their (church) family.

It was also apparent that other models and experiences informed ideas about ordained leadership. Rev P. talked about using some of the interpersonal skills he had learned in his former profession and being able to employ the previously acquired leadership skills he had not been able to express as a curate. The personal nature of ministry was highlighted as he told me he had looked for a profile with sense of life and movement, not answering all questions, but indicating the personality and character of church, more than facts about it. Rev P. believed the time between announcement and arrival should be used to build up the personal relationships on which the future depended.

The meeting with the lay leaders confirmed my working assumption that the ministerial vacancy provided an opportunity to clarify and re-state the church's identity. What could be changed and what could not was the focus of the search for a new minister and constituted the hopes and fears of the congregation before his style was known. In this church situation, they expressed willingness, indeed eagerness to be led in previously unknown ways, but the

evangelical exposition of the Bible and the missionary giving was non-negotiable. There was uncertainty about how the new minister could be informed about some of the local history, culture and relationships. There was reluctance to tell him anything unless he asked, fearing to be carriers of gossip, but also a recognition that he would be at the centre of, indeed leading, a cultural unit in which he was a stranger.

The meeting with the newly appointed priest was a confirmation of the usefulness of this conversation at a time of transition for the priest. He was able to rehearse the reasons for choosing the church and moving his family to a strange environment. He also used the time to verbalise some ideas he had had about the differences in leadership style between being a curate and in charge of the church.

Analysis of Practice.

During the meetings the participants described what they did as well as what they thought. On several occasions, indeed, their contribution to a discussion about attitudes to leadership relationships was expressed in terms of action. These meetings highlighted one area of change that I had not previously considered: an uncertainty about how the time between the minister's arrival and licensing should be handled. Past advice has been for the minister to keep as low a profile as possible. But should the newly appointed minister visit church on Sundays before licensing? Both Rev P. and the lay leaders were open to this, even though they had been told (by the Archdeacon) that it was not good practice. How else to find out how the service is organised in that space before having responsibility for organising it oneself? The value of studying the church's practices in this time was made apparent as these desires and practices appeared to indicate attitudes to the new leader of the church.

I noted that there were tasks to be performed during the ministerial vacancy and before the licensing took place that held significance. The vicarage was the most frequent site of these actions. During a vacancy a vicarage will be inspected, the garden tidied and necessary repairs carried out. Some rooms may

be re-decorated, and there may be extensive work on, say, the kitchen or bathroom. A parish is expected to contribute to this, usually part financing it and sometimes providing labour. If the previous Incumbent had not used the vicarage for parish events this can be the first time the congregation enter the house. An impression of the newcomer's lifestyle may be gleaned from changes in colour scheme and decoration. Each vicarage must contain a room to be used as a study and most conversation concerned this. The extent to which preparation of the study was seen as the essential work of the time between arrival and licensing was treated as an indication of the role to be carried out by the minister. Care, though, was needed in the interpretation of unspoken actions. Percy (2010, p.2) writes of the necessity of guessing at the "hidden meanings in structures and practices." I made a note to listen for such conversation in the future in order to make an informed 'guess' about the significance of the work to be done in the priest's study.

The reflective process.

My own experience and views are an essential part of the theoretical framework but it is not only necessary to identify the subjective distortions that may result from my presence in my own research, but also to welcome that perspective as an equal partner, relating to that of theology and the social sciences. The reflexivity that is required is not only a reflection on the fieldwork and its analysis, but an integral part of it. As a researching professional, researching lay-clergy relationships, people's reactions to me and I to them are part of the data to be analysed.

The ethical dimension of any research is heightened when the researcher has a duty of care towards those researched and wishes to have future contact with them (Moschella, 2008, pp.86-114). Self-knowledge is essential. I have asked myself about my own interest in the subject of clergy-lay relationships and, in particular, how my own identity is formed. I find that, unlike some clergy I meet, I do not have a sense of difference from those not ordained and in a meeting of lay people and those who identify themselves foremost as a priest I am more likely to

feel the latter are 'the other.' But I am aware, too, of the temptation to make what is different, familiar, in order to normalise it (Orsi, 2005, p. 6). I have my own views about the way to establish healthy relationships in a congregation and the appropriate relationship between ordained and lay leadership. I am aware I could encourage expressions of views with which I have sympathy through verbal and non-verbal signs of affirmation.

It is also true that the process of gaining informed consent is compromised by the authority given by my diocesan role. The information sheets sent to participants (Appendix Three, pp. 295-299) identify which aspects of the research activity will come to the attention of the Bishop and those which attach to my research. They explain that I am investigating the value of the process carried out, not their performance in it. The research process has, itself, distorted this examination of my practice. A real series of meetings would not have begun with consent forms and have been so obviously research, so the atmosphere and tone would have been different from the outset. I was there as a researcher, not as someone involved in the vacancy or appointment. Yet the character and approach of a researcher and of a church officer as they gain trust and encourage the sharing of views is significant and not dissimilar to each other. Neither research nor the process of guided conversation would work if people believe they must defend their actions.

I have had to consider issues of accountability in the light of the dual role of researcher and minister and the extent to which my research be affected by the needs of the organisation (Punch 1986). I have resolved that I am accountable to the Bishop for a report of my time in the parishes and will report to him and to the Archdeacon about my own perceptions of the future priorities and direction of ministry there. I am accountable to my supervisor and the University for the direction of my research and ultimately to the academic community for the contribution to the knowledge of congregations that my research represents. This dual accountability, though, threatens to compromise the assurance of confidentiality that can be given to the participants in this

research. This particular piece of research may indicate that the expectations of priest and congregation are not well matched and create extra work for those involved. I will, however, be in a position to assist in this, if necessary and desirable.

It has been necessary to consider what procedure will be followed if the participants wish to complain about my actions as a researcher. As Lay Development Adviser, I would expect parishes to complain to the Bishop if it was felt that I had acted unfairly or inappropriately. I have supplied the address of my supervisor in the letter asking for consent, and ask that complaints about the research process are addressed to Anglia Ruskin University through her.

Researchers now acknowledge that they do not begin research with a blank slate and this is especially true when the researcher has a stake in the outcome. The conscious presence of my self in this theoretical framework will be acknowledged as subjective, but contributing an insider's voice as a participant in the life of the diocese and of a congregation. After my visit to St Peter, the pilot church, I considered the impact of my self on data collection. I noted that I was unknown to all the respondents, though Rev P. and I had some mutual colleagues since he had come from my former diocese and sharing stories of them was a way of creating a relationship between us. As I considered the impact of myself on the analysis of the meetings I noted that I responded with warmth to the church's conviction that it had made a correct decision and were looking forward to welcoming Rev P. I warmly responded to the Churchwarden who used the first person plural. Questioning my response to the evidence of relationships between the participants I became aware that the enthusiasm of the Churchwarden (female) about the appointment contrasted with the more hesitant former Warden (male). I wondered if the new Warden was asserting her authority and to what extent I might favour this assertion of a female voice. I reflected that I related easily to this group, not feeling I needed to act in any but a natural manner. All participants appeared to be of similar social and cultural context and I

was not aware of any dissonance, nor of difficulty of communication between us (Jordan, 2014, p.1).

Theological Conversations.

I have taken several opportunities to engage in dialogue with colleagues during the course of this research. This has acted both as a means of testing my findings and seeking further knowledge through relationship with others.

I have made two short presentations of this research. The 'Faith in Research' day, organised by OxCept and the Research and Statistics department of the Church of England, was attended by both lay and ordained theologians and practitioners. I noted that there was particular interest in the theological undergirding of my work through the use of Zizioulas (Jordan 2014, p.4). The Adult Education Network brings together those with responsibility for adult training, both in discipleship and in ministry from Anglican dioceses and Methodist districts. I shared a session at the annual conference with a member of the 'Bridgebuilders' team, who use Bowen's analysis of family systems to shed light on conflict in churches. I took the first half of this session, talking about my exploration of relational ecclesiology, and the Bridgebuilders' officer then talked about the relevance of family systems for understanding congregations. The feedback which was received indicated that the participants were pleased to listen to a theological undergirding for such ideas as they were often asked to accept ideas arising from an educational or sociological perspective without such a link being made (Jordan, 2014, p.4). This has influenced my decision to include the theological dimensions of this research at all stages.

During the period of analysing the transcripts of the meetings I gathered the CMD officers of the diocese, who are responsible for the training and development of clergy, and the Mission and Ministry officers, who are responsible for parish development, to discuss the emerging results. After a summary of the research process I presented the summaries of the analysis and asked whether the process was one which they could use in totality or in an adapted form and

whether the language used to describe lay-clergy relations and the actions expressed were congruent with their own experience (Appendix Four).

I presented a paper on the theoretical framework for this research at the Ecclesiology and Ethnography symposium, held in Durham in 2014. This network has been particularly concerned to defend the validity of ethnography as a ecclesiological methodology as a counter to Milbank's objection to the use of social sciences (Ecclesiology and Ethnography Network, 2014)

In January 2015 I gave a lecture to the Chelmsford Theological Society entitled 'The Congregation, the Meeting Place of Sociology and Theology' (Chelmsford Cathedral, 2015). The conversations which took place on these occasions have aided my analysis of the conversations with lay and ordained leaders (pp.111-157) and contributed to my conclusions and recommendations contained in Chapter Six, pp.158-176.

Verification

This account of the methods used in this research has shown that the information gathered will be grounded in the fieldwork carried out, and described in such a way that another researcher could carry out a similar process. Analysis of the transcripts of the conversations and the need for reflexivity has necessitated a variety of methods. My own voice within the process has been made apparent, and the results examined by and discussed with other practitioners in the field of local church development. The use of this 'bricolage' of methods permits some triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p. 9) and gives confidence in the results.

Summary

This chapter has shown how the theoretical framework, described in Chapter Two, has resulted in methods of analysis which have been used to examine the conversations recorded at the pilot church. The use of the

perspectives of theology, the social sciences and self has been justified, and the interaction of each with the other demonstrated. The congregation as family, which encompasses theological, systemic and personal discourses, has been shown to be viable language with which to encourage discussion of the leadership of the local church.

Chapter Four

The meetings with lay and ordained leaders.

Introduction:

After a description of the ecclesiastical context in which this research has taken place, the social background of each of the churches visited is outlined in this chapter. The methods of analysis described in Chapter Three are then applied to each of the meetings held. Each church is dealt with as a discrete unit, in recognition of its nature as a system. The tools of narrative analysis and conversation analysis are used to identify what the meetings enabled the participants to say to each other and what they reveal about the understanding of ordained leadership. Attention is paid to the use of familial language and the analysis of each case concludes with reflection on my own place in the research.

Context of Fieldwork:

The Area Bishops and the Mission and Ministry department of the diocese welcomed my suggestion that I examine good practice at the end of a ministerial vacancy, and gave permission for me to contact church leaders and newly appointed priests. There was no contact between the parishes and the Bishops themselves. I did not plan the order of the meetings, choosing either the priest or lay leaders first, as the latter have usually been extremely busy and there was often some considerable delay before arranging a meeting.

The meetings have been held in a variety of settings: the church, my home, the participants' homes and, once, the participant's place of work. The joint meeting of lay people and the new minister was most often organised by the minister, and held in their house, the vicarage.

The description of the context of each church includes conditions such as the time and place of the meetings and references to text, objects and activities in the surroundings. I have also considered the socio-political and historical contexts

that interviewers and interviewees bring to the interview, for example, assumptions about the attitudes and identity of the other and about the purpose of the interview (Wodak and Krzyzanowski, 2008, pp. 153-158).

The meetings at each church are then described in terms of the *process* of holding facilitated meetings to identify what these meetings have permitted the participants to say to each other and then of the *content* of them, asking what have these meetings revealed about clergy-lay relationships at the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy. Thus for each set of churches there are two descriptions of the meeting with the lay leaders, the meeting with the newly appointed priest, the joint meeting and the conversation with the priest after six months.

Table of Churches

	St Peter (Pilot)	SS. Agnes and Anna	SS. Brigid and Benedict	St Chad	St David	SS Elizabeth, Edward and Evelyn
Gender of Priest	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female
Age of Priest	40s	60s	40s	40s	50s	40s
Age range of church leaders	40-70	50-70	30-70	40-60	50	30-60
Social Index of Multiple Deprivation*	11.1	St Anna 9.2 St Agnes 22.7	9.7	36	36.6	10.7
Rural/Urban	Urban	Village/town	Village/town	Inner urban	Inner urban	Rural
Previous move as Vicar~?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Previously known to me	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
<p>*Deprivation is considered to be a multi-dimensional problem, encompassing a range of domains such as financial, health, education, services or crime. A higher 'score' indicates a higher level of overall deprivation, but this is a continuous measure of relative deprivation therefore there is no definitive point on the scale below which areas are considered to be deprived and above which they are not. (Church Urban Fund, 2015)</p> <p>~ Vicar is used as shorthand for those holding pastoral charge of a benefice, rather than an assistant role.</p>						

List of Participants in Research

The names of people who were referred to, but not present at the meetings held, are in italics.

The pilot church of St Peter

Rev P, two Churchwardens, one ex Churchwarden, one pastoral assistant

A. The united benefice of St Agnes and St Anna.

Priest-in-charge: Rev A.

Rev S: Self Supporting Minister

St Agnes: two Churchwardens, Mrs. P. and Mrs. R.

St Anna: two Churchwardens, Mrs. J. and Mr. M.

Rev A's predecessor, Rev H.

B. The parish of St Brigid and St Benedict.

House for Duty priest, Rev B., under supervision of *Rev N, priest-in-charge.*

St Brigid: one Churchwardens, Mrs S and one parish rep, Mr J.

St Benedict: one Churchwarden, Mr N.

Retired priest, Rev L.

C. The District church of St Chad.

Priest-in-charge, Rev C. *Mrs. C., his wife*

two Churchwardens, Mrs. G. and Mr. K. and one Reader, Mrs F.

Rev C.'s predecessor, Rev H.

D. The Parish church of St David.

Incumbent, Bishop D.

Lay Chair, Mr O.

E. The United benefice of St Elizabeth and St Edward, and parish of St Evelyn.

Priest-in-charge, Rev E

St Elizabeth: one Churchwarden, Mme Q, one former Warden, Mr A.

St Edward, one Churchwarden, Mr R.

St Evelyn: one Churchwarden, Mr J.

A The United Benefice of St Agnes and St Anna

Context

St Agnes and St Anna form a United Benefice which borders the parish in which I live and to which I am licensed. St Agnes is a prominently sited, traditional church building, with a Low Church tradition. St Anna is a dual purpose building, with an Anglo-Catholic tradition. The villages are separated by a substantial river and relate to different towns for schools and shops.

The two churches have been a United Benefice for about five years. Before this St Anna was the sole charge of Rev A.'s predecessor and St Agnes was attached to the parish in which I live. In the past various other pairings have been suggested, creating great uncertainty. This time pairing with the church of which St Anna used to be the daughter church was suggested and was rigorously rejected, not only because this was seen as a retrogressive step, but also because they have decided to reject the ministry of women priests. Thus two parishes which had only been linked with each other in recent years were asked at the time of this appointment to make decisions together about the future. This period of confusion was compounded by falling between the retirement of one Area Bishop and the appointment of another. There was much sense that the vacancy process had been mismanaged. This is now a part-time post, combined with a deanery responsibility.

Narrative of research

The Wardens of each church asked to see me separately and I also met, on a third occasion, with the Self Supporting Minister (Rev S.). The meeting with the St Anna's Wardens took place in the church, while that with St Agnes's Wardens and with the SSM took place in their homes. The Wardens at St Agnes did not seem aware of my diocesan role. Those at St Anna had previously asked my advice about a Reader who wanted to lead worship during the vacancy.

The successful candidate (Rev A.) is the sister of the Churchwarden of the church where I am licensed, from a family who have lived on the same site for three generations. She is recently divorced from her husband who is a priest and, though in full-time ministry since 1980, this is her first post in charge of a parish. She visited our house for the first meeting, at the end of which she organised the time and place of the joint meeting without consultation with the Wardens. The meeting after six months took place in my house, at Rev A.'s suggestion, saying she preferred a face to face meeting to a telephone call.

PROCESS: What have these meetings permitted the participants to say to each other?

A distinctive feature of these churches was that people were not speaking to each other. At the separate meetings with the Wardens of each church and with the Self Supporting Minister I was told how different each place was.

It was hard to stop the flow of narrative at the meeting with the St Agnes' Wardens, even though they had initially said they were reluctant to talk, "not wanting to criticise anyone." The narrative was well constructed and they did not appear to be at all surprised by each other's comments. I guessed this was a story they had told each other as a common topic of conversation. They had felt the process of appointment was most unsatisfactory and "weird." Mrs P., a clergy widow, thought there was the appearance of consultation without the reality. Though I assured them that I was not reporting on individual cases to the Bishop I think they hoped I would.

St Anna's Wardens were keen to communicate their pleasure that this vacancy had been managed without conflict - unlike the previous one. They often used the first person plural, referring to the whole congregation: "'we did it," "we dug our heels in", whereas St Agnes' Wardens used "we," to refer to "the two of us."

Both sets of Wardens said they found the meetings extremely useful and valued the opportunity to think in broader categories than they had previously,

having concentrated on details for the profile and all the business during the vacancy. Their contributions at the joint meeting indicated that meeting with me had sparked discussion between them and further reflection on models of leadership.

Rev A. used long, well-constructed sentences in our meeting together, so these may have been matters to which she had already given some thought. Speaking with the first person singular she demonstrated how well she knew her way around the diocesan structures.

Rev S., the SSM was not present at the joint meeting and it turned out that she had not been asked. The heightened emotional language of anger and frustration expressed by the Wardens before licensing was toned down in the joint meeting and I wondered if the Wardens were aware of Rev A's connections with the officials who had (mis)managed it. Rev A, though, was just as critical of the interview day, though many present had been part of organising it. (She thought that there were too many people present, so that it was difficult to know who was from which church). The Wardens were as free to express their understanding of ordained leadership as when I met them on their own, undeterred by Rev A's attempts to 'over talk' them. They also made a point of emphasising to her "how different" the two parishes were.

Rev A, using the first person, interrupted people on three occasions when they were expressing their understandings of models of relationship, to try to correct them. On these occasions I asked Rev A if we could hear the ideas that others had. There were also times of more open discussion. There was agreement that a consultative way of working was much better than the former "imperious" appointment process and the autocratic model of leadership they observed in a neighbouring parish.

Despite the moments of apparent tension, (or perhaps because of them), the Wardens and Rev A. were extremely positive about this meeting. "It does seem a more unified parish now, post vacancy," Mrs J. said and all agreed with

that. Mrs J. also commented: "It has been helpful to have this discussion about models of leadership.... perhaps one we should have regularly with the Wardens and/or the PCC...?" Mr. M. added: "Facilitated by a third person, that would be easy, so as to explore priestly expectations and whether the priest is meeting expectations."

Six months later Rev A. said the meetings had been valuable, though she acknowledged that the discussions could not have happened without a third person. She was glad to hear how positive the Wardens felt about the appointment process. She had been surprised to hear about their insistence on meeting me separately as now they were working well as a team looking at the whole benefice. It was, she said, the first time she had moved to a church and found four Wardens already appointed with whom she could work. In the past she and her husband had had to wait for elections to engineer the appointment of Wardens. She would have liked discussions about her deanery role to have been included as she is the first priest appointed here with responsibilities outside the parishes - but at the moment is very unsure what these will involve, so this was hard to do.

Since arriving in the parishes she had received some feedback from the Wardens about what had gone well and what had caused some discontent. Whether or not this was a result of the joint meeting is, of course, hard to say, but the fact was that the Wardens were now commenting on their expectations and communicating with her.

CONTENT: What have these meetings revealed about clergy-lay relationships at the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy?

The St Agnes Wardens wanted to express their anger at the application process: their work on the profile had been deemed "all wrong." When paperwork had been lost the comment, "but you'll have another copy" demonstrated, in their eyes, a complete absence of understanding of what was involved for people not used to such responsibility.

They responded readily to my question about what they wanted in a priest, always linking this to how many services there were in each church. They (grudgingly) admitted that weddings could be included and later said it was important that Rev A was involved at the church school in their parish.

"I was looking for the popular choice," Mrs. R. said, who had felt a weight of responsibility on behalf of the congregation. During the vacancy, they both said: "we had to make lots of decisions that we shouldn't have had to."

The use of the first person plural by the Wardens at St Anna reflected their belief that they were not helpless: "we did it our own way," "we dug our heels in." Part of their sense of identity appeared to be the difference from St Agnes.' Two different parishes' one said, 'two totally different parishes,' the other agreed. They found it hard to believe that a priest could be flexible enough to worship in different styles. They described the work of a priest as "empathy and working with people," "and working with younger people," "encourage younger families and some children's work." They found it easy to think in terms of the church as a family and the priest fitting into those relationships. A "favourite aunt" was the favoured description and I later established that Mrs J. who had suggested this really had had a favourite aunt. "She'll be the sort of person anyone can go and talk to in confidence and be empathetic, a warm person, and nobody's fool." But this rather cosy description was balanced by the expectation that the priest would have the "technical knowledge" about styles of worship that laypeople lacked.

When I asked "what kind of priest you wanted, was there a consensus over that?" the response was "we didn't have a huge amount of friction in the interregnum really." This pairing might indicate an overriding concern for harmony within the congregation and, perhaps, with the neighbouring church. Rev A.'s own family was well known by both sets of Wardens and literal language about the family was employed both by them and by Rev A. They had confidence that she would understand the interrelatedness of village where church members

and those who didn't attend church knew each other well. Mrs J.'s mother had taught Rev A. at primary school. "Well it's a local family, isn't it?"

At St Anna the church was described as a family. The priest who had preceded the one who had just retired (Rev H) had been known as Father. He had been, they agreed, a true Father figure while Rev H had been too *shy* to fulfil this role.

Though the Wardens knew that the congregations were keen to meet Rev A. they thought it was entirely correct that she stayed away until her licensing. There was plenty to do at the vicarage which had been left in a mess and the Wardens thought it was best for Rev A. to get on top of the paperwork before being licensed. There was little point in coming to the PCC, since her authority would come from her licensing. They said they would have been glad to see her in church before licensing, though this might have caused problems with Rev S., the SSM. I noted the importance of the vicarage as signifier of St Anna's superior status as the parish where the Minister resides. This appeared to be true even though St Agnes has a much more prominent, ancient, church and is financially more secure.

The Wardens did not feel the need to fill her in on any news or information unless she takes the initiative and asks. It wasn't their place to tell the priest about the past.

Rev S., the SSM, had conflicting emotions about the new appointment. On the one hand it would free her to spend more time with her husband and enjoy a well-earned retirement after everything had "fallen on her shoulders," on the other she spoke of "going back to the closet." She may have been expressing her own confused awareness of her role, but this one encounter with someone in an assistant position is a reminder that this research is an examination of the distinctive relationships between lay and ordained *leaders* of a church, not necessarily between laity and clergy.

Rev A. told me that she hoped to form friendships in her new role, as she missed the team that had been formed in her last parish with the Reader and SSM. But she said she had found language about the church as a family very difficult for many people, indeed too difficult, too "fraught" and "explosive" at times. Her own desire was to lead from the middle of the crowd, not teaching a set of beliefs, but modelling a way of life. She believed that good relationships with the congregation were extremely important in order to achieve this. At the joint meeting she was able again to say that she wanted a collaborative model of leadership. She did not expect to be seen around church much before licensing: "that's what we were brought up to expect."

Mr M. expressed his dismay at the suggestion that they might have a priest who had another job elsewhere; London, for example. I assumed he was referring to a Self-Supporting priest. Priesthood must be a full time job and the priest must be available. Rev A. did not take the opportunity to clarify her deanery responsibilities, which could take her out of the parish.

When Mrs J. said that she had found our earlier discussion of family relationships within the church helpful Rev A. made it clear that she did not like talk of the church as a family, after referring to a Mothering Sunday service from which one couple had stayed away. She said firmly that she preferred a model of friendship, since Jesus made friends as a way of building his team - and her former husband had not wanted to make friends with any parishioners. She acknowledged that she could be reacting to this experience of disagreement in her own family, but still believed that friend was a better model for church relationships than family.

People were speaking from their own experiences of leadership: a good head teacher, for example, the first among equals in a senior management team, the one who enables others to work together "like mixing flour and eggs to make batter." The Wardens began to compare examples they had known of good leadership. Mrs J. expanded: "well they understand and allow the problems,

people know what is expected of them.. and people are not overburdened." Mr M. said: "I think of more than sharing in the team with one person as the figurehead.....A team of Wardens and PCC, not one person ahead of the others. Not just one person and then all the rest but working with the Wardens and the PCC." Mrs P. contributed: "well you could have a senior management team in a school, like the curriculum heads," and Mrs J. agreed: "'it's a lot about ethos. I mean leading by example, the leader being a hard worker, mutual support."

After six months Rev A. said that nothing in the content of the meetings had surprised her, and she did not want to engage in further discussion of an understanding of her role. The process itself, though, had been very helpful to her, affirming the parishes' choice of her.

Personal reflections:

I did consider whether the fact that the successful candidate is the sister of our Churchwarden should mean that I did not carry out research in this parish, but then reflected that any diocesan officer could find themselves in a similar situation. Rev A. was keen to participate, perhaps because of this personal link, but also because she herself would like to do doctoral research and she later asked my advice about funding.

I was aware that my desire to continue to have good relations with these people, because of our geographical proximity and personal links, may have made me especially anxious to appear to be helpful to them. I warmed to some of those I met more than others though. I had four accounts of the appointment process and I was able to note differences between them in their memory and perception of what had happened and in their comments on each other.

All in this group appeared to come from a similar cultural and social background.

B. The Churches of St Brigid and St Benedict

Context:

The churches of St Brigid and St Benedict are in a single parish, St Brigid being the parish church and St Benedict a 'daughter' church, with a younger building and younger congregation. Following the departure of Rev L. the parish has been linked with a rapidly growing nearby town. The priest in charge of that town, (Rev N) is now also priest in charge of St Brigid and St Benedict and the new priest who I met, (Rev B.), has taken the less authoritative role of Associate Priest. The Rev N was an 'invisible presence' (Ganzevoort, 2011) in the meetings, as Rev B, in particular, often referred to her views. Mrs S and Mr N are the parish Wardens, Mrs S worshipping at St Brigid and Mr N at St Benedict. I had had a slight contact with Rev B before the meetings, but none with the Wardens. The parish had gained some notoriety for its video advertising the vacancy which was posted on You Tube, and received over 18,000 hits (Woodham Ferrers PCC, 2013).

Narrative of Research:

I emailed the Wardens and received no reply. Having had a positive response from Rev B. I phoned one Warden, Mrs S who, very flustered, invited me to meet her and other representatives before the PCC. We met in her house, an Elizabethan moated hall. At the meeting there was only Mrs S. and the parish representative, Mr J., present. The Warden of St Benedict, Mr N. was unable to be present because his child was ill. The meeting took place just before the PCC meeting, squeezed in because "it was the last thing I wanted" according to Mrs S at a later meeting. Given the stress all were under, it was a surprisingly amicable and helpful meeting, but I noted that, in the absence of a church hall, Mrs S. held power as the owner of a convenient meeting place.

Rev B asked to meet me after she had moved, when she was able to think about her new appointment, rather than about farewells to her present situation. She did not, however, volunteer to convene the follow up meeting, which was organised four weeks after her licensing. This third meeting happened at the vicarage and there was a very relaxed atmosphere. It was clear that the lay

participants, at least, thought that I was researching the appointment process itself, rather than the relationship between the lay and ordained leaders, but the conversation on this latter subject at the joint meeting was lively. Mr N., the Warden at St Benedict, was present at this meeting.

PROCESS: What have these meetings permitted the participants to say to each other?

At the first meeting, the Warden in whose house we gathered, Mrs S. spoke at length. She wished to complain about the lack of communication from the diocese during the vacancy but also to affirm that the right decisions had been made about the appointment. Despite receiving many enquiries as a result of the video on You Tube, and the Bishop's suggestion of Rev B. who had expressed interest, the parish had decided to go ahead with advertising the post. This enabled them to be sure they had the "best person for the job." Mrs S. also spoke about the position of Rev B.'s predecessor, who had retired nearby and who had taken some services during the vacancy. She knew this was not good practice and assured me that it would not continue once Rev B. had been licensed. She thought, though, this would be hard for the retired priest to accept: "If you are a priest then people in your parish are your family, aren't they?" she said. When I commented about the future arrangements: "So Rev B will be coming to a situation that is not the same as her predecessor?" her response was that "Rev B. will be in the same house and same two churches and will take on the Old People's Home and school." What was not going to change was emphasised.

Mrs S. was thus able to articulate a number of issues: to register her frustration with a diocesan officer, assure herself that the appointment process had produced a good result and think over how to deal with the former priest. She encouraged the other person present to speak: "say something, J.," but he didn't add anything substantive. These remarks were addressed to me rather than to him. When I asked about the differing needs of the two churches her response was "there has never been a heated discussion - prayerful really," an adjacency pairing that suggests she thought conflict was a possibility.

Rev B. used the conversation with me to continue her own comparisons between her two previous curacies and to think further about models of church leadership, involving a balance between pastoral needs, relationship building and the protocol that was to be negotiated. She said she appreciated the opportunity to verbalise these thoughts and found the model of family relationships helpful as it related to her own past experience in her birth family.

Rev B. described the relationship between her and Rev N., the priest in charge as "complicated" and "quite complex." She wanted to use the joint meeting to emphasise that she is part-time in this role and to keep clear boundaries, whilst also being available for people to talk to. She also wanted to be able to talk about the enabling role of a priest in the church as it changed in the contemporary world. But the language used at the joint meeting demonstrated some confusion about the new arrangements. Mrs S. spoke of Rev N. being "at the helm" but of Rev B. being "the boss." Rev B. repeated "Rev N. is in charge" but emphasised the "collaboration is the name of the game." Rev B.'s leading of worship was praised during the joint meeting, and this may be the significant factor indicating who has authority for many in the church. Rev B. was able to emphasise that she was part-time; a necessary statement in a situation where her predecessor was as well, but few knew it because she did not make public times when she was not available.

This discussion was prompted by Rev B. talking about her desire to nurture the gifts of lay people and the innovations in the diocese of the *Transforming Presence* paper (Chelmsford, 2011). Immediately those present emphasised how much they needed a priest and how glad they were that they had got one, especially one who would share and promote the values they all held. These were described as "the Christian life in the parish" and the importance of charitable giving.

At this meeting Mr N., the second Warden, who had been absent from my first meeting, warmed to the language of family. Both Rev B. and the church

leaders said they had found the facilitated discussion of models of church leadership extremely useful. Rev B. had appreciated hearing the Wardens' affirmation that they were pleased with their decision and felt there was a good foundation for later conversations.

Six months after the date of her licensing I contacted Rev B. It was clear she had given the question of the effect of the former meetings some considerable thought and she spoke without interruption on two connected areas: the realities of church life as opposed to what had initially been presented in the advertisements and the expectations of her as a priest.

She first repeated how useful she had found these meetings, particularly in aiding her thoughts as she moved from being a curate to a position of greater responsibility. Now, as she was being pro-active in thinking through the House for Duty role she has used the language that has been shared.

She had, though, no experience of other appointments with which to compare the process. She had not heard any conversations that returned to the content of their discussions. Rev B.'s *caveat* that "like a medical trial" results could only be seen in the long term should be noted, but it is apparent that her own thinking about models of ministry changed during the period of the meetings. The conversation after six months revealed how an apparently welcome role as elder sister had caused strain in the past: being "desperate to keep everyone happy," and that the more professional, distant model of a midwife who was not expected to apologise when guiding someone through a painful episode, was preferable. Her present difficulties are with the church of St Benedict, whose Warden was readier to describe the congregation as a family.

Rev B had adopted an informal style from the beginning, and aimed to establish "normal relationships" before licensing, perhaps expecting this to alter after that service. Of all the churches I visited, Rev B. was the only priest to have attended church and been to a PCC meeting before her licensing. She did not wear her clerical collar on either occasions, but Mrs S. still pointed out to Mr N,

that when he had led a service there, "the boss was present." Rev B knew she would not, in any case, be chairing the PCC when she was licensed so she may have seen fewer problems with her attendance than she would otherwise have done.

It was important to the Wardens that the vicarage and especially the study were decorated and ready for Rev B. to start work: "so she is on the starting blocks now!" (Mrs S.) This is clearly a necessary preparation for priestly ministry, but not the real thing.

CONTENT: What have these meetings revealed about clergy-lay relationships at the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy?

It was apparent from the language used of the appointment process that the aim had been to find someone who fitted in with the church's "behavioural patterns:" they must "desire to have a laugh.... a sense of humour" (Mrs S.). The two non-negotiable elements were the use of the Book of Common Prayer and the pews at St Brigid's. Mrs S. used models to describe the differences between the two churches: "St Brigid's is like the workhorse hatching, matching and dispatching and I think St Benedict is the spiritual heart, deeply spiritual," but "there's never been any heated discussion." A second aim had been to accomplish the appointment without conflict.

Two adjacency pairs were indicative of Mrs S.'s understanding of priesthood. She found it difficult to conceive of a part-time priest: "the problem is [with being part-time] she will get sucked in, you know it's a vocation, like any parish priest, but there's something happening at the school but it's her day off, she'll want to go." It also seemed that Mrs S. saw Rev B. both as a needy human being and as a person of authority. When Rev B. visited the church before she was licensed, "She sat next to me this time - so that's giving her a bit of confidence. we're all easy going, we're just so pleased to have somebody.. to lead the flock." Mrs S. identified the incomprehensibility of "priest-speak" in the advertisement and the enquiries following the video. "We can't be expected to understand that.

There can't be a presumption that people in the congregation can eloquently put into words what they want in worship in the profile."

Neither Mrs S. nor Mr J. picked up on the language of family in describing the church. She did, however, approve of Rev B.'s activity in building relationships. She "very sensibly" came to both our services on Sunday and would be coming to that evening's PCC. Sorting out the house had gone well and a "death day" was planned, looking at funerals and the complications of the graveyard, the paperwork which Mrs S. counted as one of the hardest parts of the job.

I noted that Rev B. paired the parental approach that she said some clergy have with their congregations with "keeping them dependent." This had jarred with her own experience of childhood: "difficulties with my first training Incumbent made me feel like a small child being told off by a dominant Victorian father - but I'm actually the eldest of five, so I have always had that sense of responsibility." She could see differences between a real family and the idealised situation in a church: "sometimes in church life you get the impression you can't answer back, ..not natural - families argue and disagree but they have to compromise and move on!" In response to my question she said she would be happy to be looked up to as an elder sister, and this was how she saw her role when giving spiritual direction. It was, however, the medical metaphor of a midwife, which she had considered prior to our meeting, which she used later in conversation with the church leaders: "trying to help the birthing process to happen naturally itself," but stepping in when something goes wrong.

Rev B. visited the churches before she was licensed but she didn't wear her clerical collar on those occasions because "I'm not the Incumbent." She was keen to explore the implications of her role, including the fact that she would be part-time in the parishes. Her words about this division of labour were contradictory: "I will always have time if they want to come and talk to me, if I say that I will do something I will do it, and I'm very aware about boundaries, setting

them for myself and others - the post was advertised as Sundays and two days and I'm jolly well going to stick to that!"

At the joint meeting there was plenty of affirmation of the rightness of the new arrangements, with Rev N. as the priest in charge. Now "Having Rev N. at the helm is nice because we've dealt a lot with her in the vacancy, so because you're familiar with the priest already that made the whole thing seem a lot more smoother." Personal acquaintance was extremely important. Mrs S. said that, though there had been a steady stream of priests taking the services and "nobody had said we're getting a second best service," she felt that they were "treading water" and only able to offer "administrative, not spiritual leadership." They needed a resident priest "for innovations in worship, for example at Mothering Sunday, and for pastoral follow up: "we're just processing people, we're not making the connections so that people will go on." "One of the things that we've lacked I think is the linking of the community"

Mr N., who had not been present at the first meeting, was quick to use family language about his church. He could identify women in his congregation (St Benedict) who were 'Mums' to him and thought that getting to know a new priest would be like "learning to know your sister's boyfriend," a close relationship that is given rather than chosen. He then acknowledged that relationships within a church could be difficult because they were, in a small community, bound up with birth family relationships, giving the fact that his wife's sister was on the PCC as an example.

Mr J., the parish representative said that he did think of the church as a family but he didn't think about people taking particular individual roles, such as mother, father, brother or sister within it. Mrs S. said that Mr J. was like a second father to her, but the reasons given for this suggested a role in the village community as a whole, rather than simply the church.

My conversation with Rev B. after 6 months continued to focus on her own thoughts about her role. She said there had been some difficulties in her

relationship with St Benedict, whose informal services sometimes made her feel "surplus to requirements." As a consequence of our discussion she was able to consider the two models, of midwife and elder sister that were available to her. The latter was more helpful: "dealing with that transitional phase which is very painful, but not apologising - that's very important." There was a sense of contradiction in what Rev B. said. For example, she finds the legacy of her predecessor unhelpful - a half time priest who worked as full-timer, but the actual difficulty she spoke of was at St Benedict's where they appeared to want her to be less involved than she wanted.

Personal Reflections:

I enjoyed the meetings held in the course of visiting this parish, appreciating the history of the parish, the setting of the manorial home of Mrs S. and the humour that had been evidenced in the video and was apparent in the church leaders themselves. I warmed to Rev B., both because I knew her slightly before these meetings and because she was exploring issues of clergy-lay relationships in a way helpful to my research. I found it hard to resist giving her advice: it was not, for example, legally possible for her to become the vice-chair of the PCC, as she had suggested, as this is a lay role. If I had been acting only as a diocesan officer, and not also as a researcher, I would not have been so reticent.

I was keenly aware that I was hearing only Mrs S.'s story at the first meeting and noted that Mr N. had another perspective, coming from the smaller and younger church. He contributed fully, however, at the joint meeting.

C The church of St Chad

Context

St Chad's is a District Church within a Statutory Team of three churches. The clergy and Readers of the Team meet regularly, but I gathered there was resentment amongst the congregation about the drain on St Chad's priest's time that the Team might represent. St Chad's has always felt dominated by the parish church. It is ethnically different, being predominantly white, whereas the parish church is multi-ethnic, so St Chad's may, in this part of East London, represent the poor-white section of society.

The process of appointment had been unusual in that Rev C. had asked to meet the Wardens and Representatives to find out about the church in an informal way and he and his wife had spent several hours talking and looking around the parish and vicarage. All parties were extremely surprised when the Archdeacon, in the absence of any other candidates, had offered the post to him. But though surprised they were very pleased that they had been able to talk informally and, because Rev C. appeared to fit the person specification agreed by the whole church, they were confident that he would be acceptable to all.

Narrative of Research

The Wardens were slow to respond to emails and I contacted the Reader, Mrs F., who I knew reasonably well, to arrange the first meeting. Arranging a meeting with Rev C was not difficult and he put the date for the further, joint, meeting in the diary without consulting the others. Notwithstanding this, all three were present and keen to contribute. The follow up conversation with Rev C was brief and took place in the diocesan office, before another meeting.

The participants had little or no experience of academic research and, as "the diocese" was often mentioned, I judged that the purpose of the meetings was perceived to be to contribute to diocesan policy. In this context, the diocese referred to the diocesan office and the Area Bishop and Archdeacon.

PROCESS: What has this process enabled the participants to say to each other?

At the meeting with the church leaders before Rev C.'s licensing Mrs G. one of the Churchwardens, was a dominant voice who related the history of the appointment in great detail. She used the first person plural, speaking for them and for the whole church, but she was not contradicted by the other two present. It was an opportunity to express solidarity, both in the common vocabulary: all three used words such as "weird," "surprising," "paranoid and suspicious," and "mystifying" to describe the dioceses' behaviour and their reactions to it in their accounts of the process of appointment. This narrative of the appointment was one of triumph against the "bigwigs," those outsiders who had in the past directed the life of St Chad's. These included the lay leaders of the parish church, who were felt to look down on St Chad's, and which needed additional help for civic and occasional services, and the diocese who had a set way of making appointments which might take little heed of their needs.

Rev C. also found considerable assurance in telling his story. He was surprised to find himself in this part of the world as a parish priest as he had been born and brought up nearby and had deliberately applied for jobs elsewhere. He concluded that it was God's direction that had brought him to St Chad's and that he must combine humble listening with a sense of being called to that place to do a piece of work. The telling of the narrative was for him, as for many of those I met, a piece of theological reflection, a good way, he said, of sorting out his ideas.

At the joint meeting the narrative of the appointment was once again told by Mrs G. but the language now was of being "proactive," not controlled by the parish church. If he had not heard this already Rev C. would have been reassured that this unconventional appointment had been very satisfactory for the church and they were very pleased to have him. Strangely, at the beginning Rev C. was referred to in the third person, even though he was in the room. The story of a trip to his predecessor's licensing and new parish was told with enthusiasm: they had "handed him over." Having said goodbye and "separated the priest from the man," they were now ready to move on, looking forward to the next chapter, with a new "captain."

Rev C. used this meeting to establish several principles about the relationship he wanted in the future. In response to a question about the way he had been welcomed, ("Are we sociable and agreeable?"), he said he did not necessarily want to be loved all the time and be surrounded by people who agreed with him. He rejected the title of captain of the ship, saying he was a team coach and warned the others that there would be changes ahead. I noticed three things happening as a result of this confrontational moment. The first was that Mrs F., the Reader, who has been a significant influence guiding the church through the vacancy said "I don't think it will always be the Vicar who will move everyone along, sometimes it's going to be the people, who seize the opportunity when the Vicar's gone."

The second thing I noted was that the narrative of the change of priest was extended to include the change of direction that Rev C. represented. Rev C. expressed appreciation of his predecessor's pastoral skills and the others agreed that it was, indeed, only because of Rev P.'s work that they could consider someone who they described as "frightening" as their new priest. The Reader was thanked for her sermons on transition. Together, this was summed up in the image of a train. The train had slowed at a platform to allow Rev P. to leave, but not stopped. Some movement, albeit at a slow rate had continued, until Rev C. had got on. The train was now picking up speed and getting ready to race away. This image was repeated and developed during the meeting as there was agreement that the next chapter of the church's history was being written.

The third notable event was a disagreement about the appropriateness of family language to describe the church. Mrs F. believed that "if you asked a lot of people to describe St Chad's they would say a family." But Rev C. explicitly rejected the family model as too ill defined: "you could have people in the congregation with eighty different models and they would all be influenced by their experience."

Looking back on this meeting Rev C agreed that it had been "quite combative" though in "an amicable way." He thought that the meetings had been useful in demonstrating that differing ideas can be sorted out through talking things over. He had returned to the model of Team Coach several times in subsequent church meetings and, having said that there would be no changes for six months he now felt mandated to start changing things.

CONTENT: What have these meetings revealed about clergy-lay relationships during the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy?

These meetings contained the most developed discussion of family systems, the effect of families on ministry and of models of leadership. It was also clear that Rev C. and the church leaders had varying models of church life and leadership.

The dominant voice at the first meeting, that of Mrs G., was supported by the other two present in her use of strongly emotional language and a combative style. The subject of the action and emotions was a corporate sense of themselves, indicated by the first person plural used to describe the churches' own actions and attitudes. At this meeting family language to describe the church was used before I introduced the topic and I was told that the previous priest had encouraged church members to think of themselves and address each other as 'brother' and 'sister.' On the other hand, they also felt that church was like a family because of the conflicts that existed, with complex and intense emotional ties. Just as in a birth family, "...relationships can become intense, you have the odd wobble, people storm out," "there's always the rescuers, as in a family, and those who say "let them get on with it." It was the most clearly articulated understanding of family relationships in a church setting that I encountered. It was extended to areas I would not have thought of: not paying the diocesan quota was likened to "children trying to get money out of their parents when money is tight."

They certainly didn't want a father figure for a priest: the idea of 'father' was paired with 'distant:' they said that their previous priest was seen as an elder

brother. There had been real bereavement when he left. "It was very emotional, people crying in the congregation" They had also felt disloyal when drawing up the new person specification. "It was no disrespect to him, but some of the things we put in were not..his strengths, so it could look like criticism of him."

In this discussion Rev C.'s wife was mentioned a couple of times as someone who would be easy to welcome into the church family. Having met her they were confident that she would play a significant role in the church life. Talk about Rev C. focussed on the challenge he would bring to the church: his wife was seen as more approachable. They said: "we're becoming more of a family here" because of her anticipated future involvement.

Not that Rev C.'s persistence and strength was unwelcome: he was strong: "he'll fight our corner!" He brought experience from the "real world," as had his predecessor. This was contrasted with two previous clergy, who had been the sons of clergy: "I think they bring different personalities." They had experienced priests who were happy to open up the vicarage as an extension of the church and others who had guarded their private space. They were keenly aware of the effect of public ministry on the clergy family.

They did not expect to see Rev C. in the parish before the licensing as some of the "old stalwarts" would think that improper. They expressed the concern of church members that things would change as the expectation was that a new priest always brings changes. One issue concerning the wearing of robes had been mentioned and they hoped Rev C would not abandon them altogether: "I do think when someone is in their robes there is that holiness and that dimension to the communion service."

They were certainly "prepared to be led, but want to know in what direction and reasons for it." They were most concerned, not at particular decisions, but that the unity of the church would be maintained through good communication and consultation, maintaining the practice of consulting the whole congregation. They had been impressed by Rev C.'s desire to get to know

names and faces, asking for photographs and contact details and they appreciated the fact that he had volunteered information about himself, including a previous divorce.

Rev C. had clearly thought about the nature of ordained leadership during his theological studies and curacy. The first mention of family relationships in church was paired with a recognition of the importance of being open about his own situation as a divorcee and the connection between that and his practice of ministry: "It's hard to say... I know in my divorce God was working ,.... if we didn't use those experiences what was the use of them - God might say, I didn't put you through all that for you to turn your back on that!" He and his wife now came as a pair and the informal interview had enabled the church leaders to see them both "in our natural state." He had experienced the adverse effect of an unhealthy relationship between a priest and their spouse. "People have a great emotional radar - you can't pull the wool over their eyes." For this reason he was happy to know that the church leaders had met his wife and would be welcoming her as much as him. He was, though, not keen on the family metaphor, since he thought this was so ambiguous for people as they had different experiences of family.

He had examined the theological models of shepherd and pastor and related them to the interpersonal skills he had acquired as a salesman. His predominant model now came from the world of sport since he believed the role of a team coach well described the approach of someone who placed their skills at the service of a group of people so that they achieved what they were charged to do. He expressed some concern that he was completely different to his predecessor who, he understood, had been a very gentle man who had been good at tender nurture and encouragement. He had wondered if the balance between encouragement and challenge needed to be altered, but "like a family, outsiders can't criticise."

He had been glad that, because what turned out to be the interview had been an informal conversation, he had been wearing his jeans, sweat shirt and no

clerical collar and there was "no barrier" between him and the church leaders. He saw his dog collar as a tool, getting him noticed on the streets or in the pub, but not always necessary when leading a service. Attending church before he was licensed would be a distraction from the priest, the sermon and the worship that was taking place and going to a PCC would be pointless as he would have no more authority than anyone else until the "Bishop gave you the nod." His understanding of his authority, therefore, rested in the "spiritual dynamic" that goes with the Bishop's authorisation, unsupported by material objects.

Rev C.'s reluctance to use family language of church was challenged at the joint meeting as one Warden said that most church members would describe themselves as part of a family and the other said that the previous Vicar had been a brother to them. When Mrs F. commented on the way that people whom she had known almost all her life treated her differently once she was licensed as a Reader the Warden explained, " We do see you (both) as above ourselves because you're set apart, through your Ministry" but this Reader's ministry had been like "receiving help from a member of the family who had done well."

So Rev C. used this meeting to say much about his style of leadership. He made it clear that he was prepared to distance himself from the congregation, needing the emotional distance to enable him to make "tough decisions" and to give bad news. He said he had learned in his business experience that this meant risking unpopularity. He stated: "my authority doesn't come from this, (pointing to his dog collar) my authority only comes from my relationship with the Father, God through Jesus" but this was not followed up.

It was interesting to hear at the end of this meeting that Mrs G. said it had been valuable and "would have been especially useful if we had had any misunderstandings: it would have given us opportunities to explore and to talk together. We would properly have a better understanding of how the issue had come up and how we could work together at it." As his response to the question about the usefulness of the meetings Rev C. said "I think it's good to look at the

future and see who's setting the pace because it's not always the priest who is leading the change." I wondered if he had learned to say this during this meeting, reacting to the Reader's comment about lay people taking the initiative in introducing changes.

At the first meeting with me Rev C. sat behind his desk in his study and spoke in a commanding way. At the joint meeting he was still behind a desk, but did not speak at all at first but, as Mrs G. began to waffle, interrupted her and was definite about his views. In this his actions were consistent with his declared aim of bringing change and acting as a team coach.

When we met after six months, Rev C. had since thought about adopting the model of a sheepdog rather than a shepherd, in that this was a reminder that the flock did not belong to him. The Reader had now moved away (this was planned before his appointment) and he had a better appreciation of how significant her contribution had been. He was now working to equip more people for positions of leadership, leading the diocesan foundation course with his wife.

Rev C. remembered that we had talked about fact that his coming would mean changes would happen. He appreciated the agreement that he believed was expressed at the joint meeting that changes were themselves part of narrative of church. Following the joint meeting he said he had a better idea of what had happened before and how the congregation were saying goodbye to his predecessor and were ready to move on.

Personal Reflections:

I already knew the Reader quite well and asked her to set up the meeting when I had no response at first, so I used my position to speed up and enable the conversation to take place. My sympathy with the lay leaders, though, may have extended beyond this. The tape of the meeting indicates that I may have encouraged the expression of local autonomy with affirmative sounds and it is, therefore also possible that non-verbal signals, such as nods, were used. I knew

during the meeting, as they expressed fears about what Rev C. might wear or not wear for worship, that I wanted to tell them the Canon Law (Canon B8) relating to robes, which states that the PCC must be consulted about such changes (Church of England, 2014d). I was held back by internal confusion about whether this was the proper responsibility of someone carrying out research, and by the possible effect of appearing to stand up for the lay voice. In my professional role I would not have hesitated.

Since Rev C. had been brought up in the locality there was no distinction between him and the lay leaders in social or cultural background. It was believed that their former priest's new congregation had more capable people: "teachers, architects and so on." No-one else in the congregation was mentioned by name: There was no sense that story depended on anyone not in the room, despite repeated reference to whole church.

The Parish Church of St David

Context

St David is a large, busy town centre church, on the site of an Abbey founded in the 7th century. The parish represents one of the more prestigious appointments in the diocese. But it had been in vacancy for two years, and the announcement of the appointment of a Bishop from the Anglican Communion had been delayed by issues relating to his visa.

Narrative of Research

I had contacted Bishop D. while he was still in Africa and he had willingly agreed to take part. We met in his apartment in London as the vicarage was not ready. But it proved difficult to contact anyone from the church as several messages that were left received no reply. One Warden suggested I talk to Mr O. who is the Lay Chair. I met him on his own, in his high-street business. After Bishop D.'s licensing I met with Mr O and the Bishop on the church premises.

Mr O. was eager to help with research, as he had carried out research himself and understood the nature and purpose of academic research. Bishop D. had studied social anthropology and responded warmly to a discussion of local culture. Thus I only met with one church leader and the meeting with the newly appointed Incumbent only included that one lay person. As an examination of the attitudes of the church community to the lay-clergy relationship it was, therefore, disappointing, but indicative of the difficulties often faced by diocesan officers. The reasons given for a reluctance to meet was the pressure on people's time that the vacancy was causing. The conversations that were had, though, were particularly interesting in the light of the cross-cultural influences. In the west of the diocese, containing five London boroughs, such a cultural diversity is now the normal state of affairs.

PROCESS: What have these meetings permitted the participants to say to each other?

When we finally met Mr O. said he was keen to co-operate, and also appeared glad of the opportunity to communicate how busy he had been,

responding to a question about responsibilities during the vacancy by showing me the files of paperwork which were for him the evidence of this. He spoke readily of how significant the church was in the life of the town. He spoke in the first person, as someone with considerable responsibility for the rest of the congregation.

Bishop D. had a very clearly expressed narrative about the story of his appointment, which was both evidence of his training as a lawyer and the repetition to the immigration authorities of the reasons for leaving his home country to take this apparent demotion. The needs of each Province, diocese, church and family were woven together and placed within a narrative of God's guidance. He could name several individuals who had become part of this story and was well aware of the web of relationships that had made the move possible. He used the first person plural at numerous points: "we can work together," "we are all very committed to this," to describe this international community and express a desire to work as part of the team in the parish. There was intentional theological reflection and prayer in this story. The coming together of his own prayers, the needs of his family and the needs and opportunities in the UK gave Bishop D. confidence that he was in the right place at the right time.

When Bishop D. spoke about his vision for the parish I was not sure if his remarks were addressed to Mr O. or to me, or were a rehearsal for a later Church Council. He spoke in language that was likely to be understood by me, talking about the visit of Orthodox monks from their monastery in East Essex who had come to venerate the saints who had been buried at the Abbey, before the division between the Eastern and Western church in the 11th century. He was able at this meeting to demonstrate his learning and experience and to say how committed he was to finding out the appropriate ways of using these gifts in this new setting. He wanted to be a student, learning about the local culture, the place of the local leadership, the past experiences and the future dreams: "the heartbeat of a place." Having studied some social anthropology he described himself as a "prayerful anthropologist;" a phrase coined, I think, during our

conversation. "My whole approach is grounded in prayer. It's easy to dismiss that it's prayer seeking that guidance and leading in any particular situation. I want to tap into the depth of what this place is about." He did not talk of further responsibilities outside the parish, though both he and I knew this was expected of him.

In this discussion of models of leadership Mr O. described himself as a "manager for God," intentionally contrasting himself with the Vicar. Bishop D. did, however, address praise specifically to Mr O. for his leadership during the vacancy. This was going to be a relationship in which people were to be affirmed in the good they had done.

Both Mr O. and Bishop D. had given considerable thought to their understanding of the leadership of St David before our meetings. Bishop D.'s phrase, a 'prayerful anthropologist,' may have been first formed in our conversation, but it summed up what he had previously considered. The meetings, however, enabled them to voice them to each other. There were a number of matters in which the conversations enabled Bishop D. and Mr O. to hear how their views complemented each other. Bishop D. has left his extended family in Botswana in order to be with his wife and children in the UK. His nuclear family is clearly important to him and he strongly believes in the theological reality of the family of God. Though trained at theological college to expect to be called 'Father' he is, however, flexible about language. He shared with Mr O. an understanding that the description of the church as a family was foundational, but resisted any suggestion that "Father knows best."

CONTENT: What have these meetings revealed about clergy-lay relationships during the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy?

Mr O. explained how the Vicar would need to relate to the Mayor and to the church school and the many visitors to the cafe, those who used the church as a meeting place and those who came as tourists and pilgrims. A question about the difference the fact that the candidate came from overseas had made was answered in terms of the difference that the size of the responsibilities of the job

had made in the choice of a new priest. The size of the job could be gauged by the number of services held in church: perhaps as it had been these for which he had had to find cover during the vacancy it was not surprising that it was uppermost in his mind when thinking about the role of the Vicar. He spoke in the first person, not mentioning the activities of anyone else in the parish. When I introduced the subject of relationships in the life of the church he wanted to talk in terms of communication. His business was in mobile phone retailing and he said it was natural to him to see communication between people as of the highest importance. Through the long vacancy and delays in obtaining the correct papers for Bishop D there had often been times when there was no news that could be communicated, but he realised that each time there was a meeting the congregation expected to hear something and interpreted 'no news' as a piece of news that was being kept from them.

Even though there were many birth families in the congregation, Mr O. thought that "the bottom line is the church is always a family," who would look to the Vicar as their "spiritual father." This was aided, not hindered, by the informal approach that Bishop D. had already demonstrated. There was no automatic sense that "Father knows best," as there were plenty of strong opinions who must be listened to and their views taken into account.

Having no conception of the size and delicacy of the role that Bishop D. had already accomplished, Mr O. wished to communicate the size of the task at St David's to him. He was, however, reluctant to think of initiating a conversation with him on any particular issue or policy: he would expect the new Vicar to give the lead and ask him what he wanted to know about. There would, he thought, be a significant difference between his own leadership and that of the Vicar's since, being ordained and a Bishop at that, he would instantly have more respect. He was concerned, though, the "bigger church," that is, the diocese, might "take him from us."

Mr O. could see some overlap between the responsibilities of lay leadership and ordained leadership, in, for example, the chairing of the PCC, where one must be "a strong leader." "I mean I have been lay chair and I have had to take decisions which I believe are in the interests of the church and not the emotional choice." The need for leaders to lay aside personal friendships and take the long view was shared. But "St David is not 'Vicar knows best', if you tried 'Vicar knows best' you would not succeed in St David.... a strong leader can be democratic."

Talking of the relationship between clergy and lay people, Bishop D. compared the situation in Central Africa with the West. He was not happy that the culture of dependency, found in African countries' relationship with the West, was also apparent in congregations' attitudes to their priest. He bemoaned the way that professional and well trained people "come into church and play dumb." But yet I noted that, though he thought the appointment process was more 'democratic' in England, he had believed that there was a greater sense of involvement in prayer amongst his African congregations, so that everyone believed they had a role to play. He believed the appointment process began the relationship between priest and people: "and when I went there it was interactive; I asked questions and of course they asked me questions. That means they can feel they have a part in this appointment and we are all committed to it."

Much of Bishop D.'s way of working involved relationships. He was well aware of the interdependence of individuals, listing "The Archbishop, the Senior Appointments Adviser, the Clergy Appointments Adviser and Bishop Stephen" as some of those whose friendship and work had brought him to this place. He believed God created this web of relationships: "So my prayers were met with the opportunity." He saw birth family relationships reflected in church: "Oh yes in Botswana the church can be a substitute family as well. But we call ourselves brothers and sisters and so we are, children of the one heavenly Father." He expressed flexibility about what people called him: "Father," "Pastor," "Uncle;" the name mattered less than that the relationship was healthy and healing. He

recognised that, for many people there were painful memories attached to labels from family life. So, though church could be a "substitute family" and was, truly one baptised family with one Heavenly Father, language should not be allowed to get in the way of spiritual growth. He was even willing to be known as a "mother" or "aunt!"

At the joint meeting it was clear that both Mr O. and Bishop D. wanted to build on the relationship that had begun to develop between them and to emphasise the necessity of forming relationships with the church. Bishop D. said "and the whole ministry, it is about a new beginning, a new life each time you have a new ministry, the new Incumbent, it is a new lease of life. Even for the Incumbent in a new place it's a breath of the spirit."

He was aiming to be involved in everything at first so as "to be totally aware of the heartbeat of a place." "Certainly the key is rooting my own explorations in prayer" "So going forward is about tapping into the depth of what this place is about and providing again that spiritual place and home for many people. To be a place of pilgrimage, to connect with the saints of the past and to be strengthened in our own pilgrimage." Thus both Mr O. and Bishop D. described their roles in relational ways, Mr O. as a manager of people and a politician, and the Bishop as one who did not mind the language used so long as the caring and nurturing role was active.

In their joint meeting Mr O. told the story of Bishop D. coming to the first service, driving across London as he was still not able to live in his vicarage, and of his immense relief that as soon as the service began, it was clear that the Bishop was "in charge." The licensing service was not mentioned in connection with the new leadership.

Personal Reflections

The difficulty of meeting with anyone from the church was resolved by Mr O.'s willingness to talk, but the meeting was held in his telephone business in a busy high street. It was an alien environment, the first time I had been in such a

shop in such an area. Though I recorded the interview, it was held on the shop floor and there were customers and a few telephone calls. Mr O's narrative, which appeared centred on his role, was hard to appreciate, perhaps because of his use of first person which jarred. Since I didn't know the extent of Mr O's responsibilities, I was suspicious of his self-importance. In contrast, I found Bishop D. easy to listen to and his (polished) narrative inspiring. He underplayed his role in C. Africa - and then seemed gracious in allowing Mr O. time to speak. I shared more of Bishop D.'s experiences than Mr O. such as theological education in this country and an interest in spirituality, even though he had just come from Central Africa.

E. The United Benefice of St Elizabeth and St Edward and the parish of St Evelyn

Context

Two of these clusters of parishes (St Elizabeth and St Edward) are in fairly prosperous areas: significant villages surrounded by arable land. They are in a United Benefice. The Wardens and leaders I spoke to from these parishes did not themselves work on the land, but had professional jobs. The church and village at the third parish of St Evelyn is, however, on land that is sparsely populated and led by a farmer who is the Churchwarden. This church has been in vacancy for about 11 years and Mr J is now the only Warden and officer there. There are very few regular worshippers, but the church is used by the farming community for occasional offices.

St Elizabeth and St Edward were not told until near the end of the appointment process that the new priest would have responsibility for the third parish as well. I was not told of differences in worship styles, so they may not be significant to those I met.

Narrative of Research

There was great difficulty in meeting with the lay leaders both before and after licensing: I may well have abandoned the attempt except that Rev E. was very keen. This was her first pastoral charge and she said she had found our conversation particularly helpful as she made the transition from thinking as a curate. Only one Warden Mr R., was able to meet me before the licensing and Rev E. found it hard to convene the group for a meeting afterwards. I met with the priest and four Wardens seven weeks after the licensing service, which was the longest period of time of any of the parishes researched. We met at the vicarage. The one Warden whom I had met before the licensing service was not present: though he was expected he didn't arrive.

PROCESS: What has this process enabled the participants to say to each other?

During these meetings the participants appeared to gain a new insight into their feelings and understanding as they spoke. This was especially true for the two one to one conversations which I had, with the Warden of St Edward (Mr R.) and with the newly appointed priest (Rev E.).

Mr R. was not at first clear about the distinctive nature of church leadership and used the language of business with which he was familiar. But engagement with deanery discussions about the shortage of priests had focussed attention on the role of a priest. He spoke in personal terms about his need for spiritual guidance.

As Mr R was not at the later joint meeting of priest and church leaders the insights of this conversation did not inform the process of reaching a communal understanding of church leadership. His own need for a spiritual guide had, however, been clearly articulated.

In contrast to Mr R, Rev E. found the language of models an easy one to use and particularly warmed to thinking of the congregation as a family. She spoke fluently, without interruption, as though in a 'stream of consciousness.' She thought people would welcome ideas framed as models rather than abstract concepts such as facilitative or collaborative ministry. She feared the change from being the curate to being "the one expected to make decisions about churchyards and all that stuff." She used both first and second person singular, her use of the second being accompanied by a questioning tone, an attempt to seek agreement to what she had said. Rev E. later remembered this meeting as encouraging as it had reminded her of the skills she had acquired in business when dealing with people across a wide distance.

At the joint meeting there was very little discussion of the appointment process, that being some months behind them, though the suddenness of the decision to link with St Evelyn was still live in their memory. They were able to

agree, in front of St Evelyn's Warden, that they welcomed the link; it was the manner of being informed that they resented. Rev E. opened the meeting with a discussion of models of leadership, stating clearly that this was what I was researching. It was apparent at this joint meeting that Rev E. needed to exert herself to prevent one person in particular from deciding the agenda and she did not entirely succeed in having the discussion she wanted. The introduction provoked a discussion on what the churches needed a priest for, reflecting agreement that this needed to be restated in the present climate where there might be a suggestion that a place could manage without one. Some impossible ideals were suggested and one person, apparently teasing Rev E., said the parish would have preferred a male priest. Rev E., however, remembered the meeting as an affirmative one, in which it was good to hear how pleased people were that she had arrived. I thought there was an element of power play during this meeting and Rev E. used one moment in the conversation to remind the gathered Wardens of her considerable previous experience as a manager. Six months after licensing, however, she said that she was still surprised by how grateful people were that "she had turned up and was herself" on many occasions.

She had, indeed found the whole process encouraging, but I was left wondering how much the reflection on the task ahead had actually been daunting. She used the conversation after six months to voice some explicit criticism of the lack of preparation given by the diocese and inadequate supervision in the new role. She had realised that the model which had seemed helpful, her previous experience in management, might not be so useful when working with volunteers. The telephone conversation ended on a depressing note: "But I do feel very alone. In business you would never be given this amount of responsibility and be left unsupervised. I don't really know who my boss is! It's just overwhelming. If I didn't have (*spouse*) I think I would go under!"

CONTENT: What have these meetings revealed about clergy-lay relationships during the time of transition at the end of a ministerial vacancy?

At the meeting with the Warden of St Edward (Mr R.) the conversation began with the narrative of the appointment process, concentrating on the way in which the decision to include St Evelyn was announced. He was keen to tell me of his business credentials and, at first, said that he did not want a personal relationship with the priest: running the churches, with the complex variety of responsibilities would require a business head, which was what had attracted him to Rev E. Mr R. was keen to assure me that the decision had been unanimous as consensus was highly valued. He paired the word 'relationship' with emotional ties which were not relevant to church leadership, preferring to speak of a partnership. The Vicar should be someone you could have a discussion with, disagree but stand by each other. He used the second personal singular, distanced and professional. His experience of business, though, is that of a family business and he said he had experienced a close working relationship with his business partner. The fact that he was introducing his (grown up) daughter into his business suggested that he doesn't keep family and business worlds apart.

He clearly articulated two distinct roles for the priest: "To be the visible sign of the church's presence.... to represent church in the community" and "to be the one who knows about the Bible and theology." Mr R recognised his own lack of knowledge of the Bible as, though he had been Churchwarden on and off for eighteen years, he had only started reading the Bible eight years ago and had a lot to learn. His response to the question; "what do you hope to do in the next few months?" was answered in terms of the need to help families enjoy life together, rather than be fragmented by many activities. He resisted any talk of the church as a family: the impression given was that the church was an institution that threatened family life. Mr R. was ill at ease with the language of metaphor and especially with the model of family for the church. He appeared surprised by his own realisation that church life went beyond the management of a large and complex business.

Rev E. talked freely about the interview process, which she felt had not tested core ministerial competencies. It had included an invitation to preach which she thought was artificial and a social situation which was, she said, "unfair to anyone not used to that." She did not see the anomaly in then describing parish work as revolving around people. During our discussion she reflected how her training Incumbent had wanted to see himself as a brother, but she found this neglected the obvious difference in power between them. She could, though, see that someone in her previous congregation had acted in a maternal role. She was herself the eldest sister, though did not think this affected her behaviour. She was now attracted to the idea of the congregation as a family, but when I commented: "Family does seem to be a popular metaphor amongst congregations..." I could not follow her response: "One of the things that has struck me is that one of the Wardens said all this is how we do things, unless you want to completely change it, and I thought why should I want to change it, but I've only just come here, what does that mean?"

I was reminded during this conversation that people can interpret the same model in different ways. In contrast to Rev B., Rev E. thought the model of midwife conveyed "expertise" and would suit a congregation that is "less mature and wants the priest to make all the decisions." It was also apparent that both Mr R. and Rev E. used the language of business to describe their mode of operation, but Mr R. was an entrepreneur, having developed his own business, while Rev E. had been a manager in a large organisation. Her experience lay in non-directive consultation: "Mainly it's like throwing a party you provide the food and drink and invite people and see what they are going to do! Seeing what emerges. Letting people be themselves, fulfil the potential but it's not having a pattern and saying it's got to be this way."

Rev E. was open about her anxiety as she began this new responsibility and could see that she might well not be able to act in the non-directive way that she favoured. She gave a clear direction to the group about the substance of my

research and how helpful she had found the conversation that we had had. This was not wholly in line with her intention to allow ideas to emerge from a group!

As the narrative of the vacancy was told at the joint meeting I was struck by the Wardens' agreements that the most useful piece of information had come, they said, from the present Area Dean and a former Vicar of the parishes. "She said, 'Stick together and be strong.' She said that to us, the Wardens. 'Stick together ... you owe it to the next Incumbent to stay in charge.' Well we've organised the priests didn't we? 'Stay in charge,' she said. I don't know what she thought could happen! But we should call meetings and create the agendas. Perhaps without a Vicar there are more people doing things but not to allow surrogate Vicars." This was countered by the Churchwarden from St Evelyn, who thought the church needed outsiders and the whole of the small congregation joining in. There was no such thing as too much interest in leading congregation!

Invitations to discuss what kind of leadership the priest should exercise were met with reasons why it was important that the parishes had a priest, many fearing that they would be deprived of one. There was a strong belief that "people have a need for a priest." Several examples of bereavement situations were given as evidence of this. The Farmer/Warden of St Evelyn who was a local person and well known in the area had not felt able to talk to a fellow farmer when his wife died – an outsider was preferable if ordained. Thus, though lay people should engage in developing their skills, there was an irreducible core for which a priestly presence was required. There were, though, different models of priesthood at play. A couple of Wardens were anxious not to be seen to be "telling the Vicar what to do," even though Rev E had asked for information about local customs and habits, while the same Wardens agreed that "a modern day Vicar has got to be one of us, not like in the old days when you called them 'Sir' and they were well up in the ranking in the village."

I was told that between the appointment and the licensing service posters of Rev E. had been put up around the villages advertising her arrival. She would

definitely not be a private person any more. Villagers were said to be glad to see her around, though understood that there was a lot to get ready at the vicarage.

Speaking six months after her licensing, Rev E. said that as well as some serious practical problems, such as the theft of lead from a church roof, she was staggered by the trust that many people placed her in. "What's really surprised me has been those who think that the church hasn't visited unless I have - even if the Pastoral Team has been, or even the curate, who they have known for 25 years (a former Reader, now ordained and locally deployed). I seem to be a symbol of the church, for those who are part of the congregation and those who are not regular worshippers and how to do this across six churches? So it's not about your own individuality, but the role." The change from her previous role as curate and her experience in business was marked: "People invest so much more in you and you get so close and personal to people at special times in their lives. So it's very different from other businesses and industry."

I asked if the attitude to her was different amongst the non-farming population as there are a substantial number of professional and business people living in the area. She answered this in terms of gender, giving the example of the Churchwarden, Mr R, whom I met before licensing. "The farming community is very gendered, very clear roles for men and women! And Mr R. doesn't undermine my leadership - some men try to, just treating me as a bit delicate. So I wonder how gendered models of leadership are, after all, if I think of a shepherd I tend to think of a male - but a midwife is usually female." She had been with many clergy who did not think *Transforming Presence* (Chelmsford, 2011) was a viable model for the future. She herself often wondered how it could work when people so clearly appeared to want their own priest, so she had her own questions. "I believe we are all Body of Christ together, so I want to know how to do this - but we need people who can be relied on in order to sustain the church. And how much do I need to know in order to be able to help and manage people who were doing things, without doing it myself?"

Personal Reflections

I had known Rev E. through diocesan work and it was easy to arrange a meeting with her, but I met considerable resistance from Wardens. I was told how tired they were, approaching exhaustion, in fact. I noted that Rev E.'s position as the eldest sister matched her ease with managing staff - but she talked more as a consultant when thinking about decision emerging from the parish. I wondered if there was a contradiction in which of her own experiences to use?

Rev E.'s perception was that in this locality it would take two years before anybody said anything real to her. This makes a process of facilitated meetings hard to carry out in the early days. Rev E. later said that the farming voice is much more dominant, but this had not been apparent at the joint meeting. At the end of the post-licensing conversation with Rev E. I was most concerned about her. She had said that she felt very alone and nearly overwhelmed. It is entirely possible that it has been my questions which have confirmed the task ahead and the weakness of the skills she has been relying on.

There were two parishes which I approached but where I was not able to carry out research.

At one I had no response from the newly appointed priest, though I had been advised to contact him by the Area Bishop. At another the Wardens agreed but the priest decided against this. This may have been connected to his own sensitivities as he began at a parish where his predecessor and most of the PCC had left for the Ordinariate. I thanked the Wardens for their willingness to co-operate.

I did consider altering my practice of contacting both the clergy and lay people at the same time, but I made a conscious decision after this not to check with the Wardens or the priest first.

Chapter Five

The Analysis of Conversations

Introduction

Reflection on theory and practice has been interwoven in all stages of this study. In the first chapter I examined the national, diocesan and personal context of this research and identified the gap in knowledge that this thesis addresses. In Chapter Two I reviewed current work on lay-clergy relationships, in the light of the survey of the literature on ecclesiology, priesthood and the nature of lay ministry. I concluded that it was necessary to examine the nature of local congregations in order to understand the differing views of them that ordained and lay leaders have. The differing perspectives of theology, the social sciences and my own experience in congregations form the theoretical framework, which is used to identify the methods of analysis described in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four I reviewed the meetings held in the light of the perspectives of theology, sociology and my own view of the local church.

This chapter examines the views of the lay and ordained leaders about the role of priests and the nature of the local church. I have recorded my interpretation of the views which I heard, followed by my understanding of the source of those views. I have then compared the ordinary and academic theologies which they reveal. I have given more space to the views expressed by the lay members of churches, as a voice that is less often heard. I have then retold the story of parts of the meetings as a conversation between ordinary theology and academic theology. In the light of experience gained through the facilitation of these conversations I propose a revised process and evaluate the effectiveness of this process for improving the relationship between lay and ordained leaders of Anglican congregations.

Analysis of the meetings held

The conversations that I facilitated told the story of the appointment process, the arrival of the new priest and the priest's own thoughts about their new role (Chapter Four, pp.66-111). I have used the tools of narrative and conversation analysis and attended to the use of familial language in order to identify the theological convictions that the participants in the conversations hold about the role of priests, and the nature of local congregations. It is these topics which are at the forefront of people's minds at the time of the appointment. My analysis of the recordings of the conversations examines whether there is mutual understanding between lay and ordained people of each other's theology, both spoken and practised.

The pattern of analysis

The method of analysis of the data has been determined by the theoretical framework adopted and the methodology consequent upon it. Accepting the equal role of the self in the research project has facilitated dialogue between the social sciences and theology by paying attention to the participation of myself as researcher in the life of the Trinity, and so of the church, and of participation in the family-like system of the local congregation. As explained in Chapter Two (p. 42), it has proved impossible to separate entirely the perception of the local congregation which arises from a trinitarian ecclesiology, from relational ontology and from Family Systems Theory, so I have adopted the following pattern of analysis which addresses the interaction between these viewpoints.

I looked at each church as a unit, being interested in the interaction between members of each church and between ordained and lay leadership within it. I discerned a variety of theologies of priesthood and of the local church, drawn from differing sources. These could sometimes be categorised as a lay view and a clergy view, but not always. The distinction noted by Astley (2002) between ordinary theology and academic has indicated that these views may be categorised in two groups: those arising from formal theological study and those from people who have not received their theology in that way. Astley suggests

that there is a difference of degree rather than of kind between academic and ordinary theology, describing ordinary theology as the 'early ripples resulting from religious change,' while academic theology results from further study and reflection (2002, p. 87). Since the concept of ordinary theology is his own it is not surprising that it is more precisely defined than academic theology, which is taken to encompass the classical works of theologians, the present work of university academic theologians and that communicated in churches by clergy trained in this tradition. My position in the diocese has enabled me to know that none of the lay people I met had studied theology except as part of the diocesan two year foundation course (Diocese of Chelmsford, 2014) and most had not done that. I have interpreted the voices of the lay leaders as ordinary theology, and those of the ordained as expressing both the outcome of their academic training and, albeit nearly drowned out, the echoes of their initial ordinary theology.

The social and ecclesiastical context of the churches, the review of the conversations held and an account of my personal reactions is contained in Chapter 4 (pp. 66-111). After these conversations I arranged three meetings with professional colleagues and asked them to read an initial paper on my analysis of the meetings held (Appendix Four). This affirmed the truth of a relational epistemology (Chapter 2, p.26) which understands the value and necessity of a shared approach to truth seeking. These meetings tested my own reactions to the research and provided further insight. The analysis in this chapter also includes the responses received from a paper presented at the Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference in Durham and to final year curates in Chelmsford Diocese and recorded in a Research Log which I have kept throughout the period of research (Jordan, 2014). While, therefore, the substantial part of the analysis took place soon after the meetings were held, reflection on them has been woven into my professional practice. This is fitting for work for a professional doctorate, in which reflection on practice cannot be isolated from other work involving contact with people and local churches.

The limitations of this research.

The Church of England may certainly be described as a complex system and any perception of order may be an artificial imposition, particularly when the research has been on a small scale (Knight, 2002). I have met with representatives of ten churches, including the pilot church and recorded a total of eighteen conversations. Small scale researchers are, however, well placed to observe the complexity of human interaction and I have been able to facilitate conversations about the role of the priest and the nature of the local church. Since, as Knight argues, all human society takes place in particular situations, no attempt should be made to universalise findings by 'disinfecting' the particularities of each place out of a situation (2002, p.160). I have noted the particular circumstances of each church and paid attention to the context in which statements were made. I have analysed the conversations both in terms of the process and of the content of the conversations, and so am able to distinguish between my arguments for the transferability of the process of carrying out such conversations and assertions about the content of them (Chapter Three, p.51).

A possible weakness of this research may be that I was inviting responses to questions which many of the respondents, particularly those without formal theological training, had not considered before we met. These answers were not considered responses. Imposing order on these responses itself risks oversimplification and distortion (Astley, 2002, p.102). I have treated each congregation as a complex system, not only complicated, but also indeterminate and non-linear (Knight, 2002, 146). Though I have suggested sources for the positions taken by the lay and ordained participants in this research, I am aware that "things happen because of the interplay of contingent connections in the network of relationships" (Knight, 2002, 155). The conversations themselves were marked by mutual interaction and influence and views were exchanged and modified during them. If the conversations had continued further views would have been exchanged, which would have affected and, possibly, changed the views of others present. The record of these conversations is a record of a moment in time. If time had allowed, however, contact with lay participants as

well as with the ordained leaders six months after the meetings would have enabled reflection on their effect.

I am also aware that much of what follows is my interpretation of what was said. I did not inquire of the lay participants as to the source of the ideas and practices that were recorded as I judged that such a question would raise anxieties that they had said the wrong thing. I was aware of myself as priest in their conversation and one likely to be seen as correcting their language. (Healy, 2004, p.14) On some occasions the information was volunteered: a book read, or a past Vicar, for example, but in most cases I have looked to wider trends to explain the differing strands of opinion. In this I have drawn on my own experience as a theological educator and parish development officer over a quarter of a century.

I did not enquire at all about the world outside of ecclesiastical structures, which many see as the proper sphere of the laity (Gibbs, 1971). Those I spoke to were keen to be involved in the church's governance and did not think that such matters should be left solely to clergy.

Analysis of the Conversations

The conversations that were facilitated, both with the lay leaders on their own and with the ordained leader, were rich with theological ideas. As views were expressed about the role of the ministerial priesthood and the nature of the local church I observed areas of disagreement, both implicit and explicit between the participants. The analysis that follows identifies these areas of difference, as critical to any attempt to improve relations between leaders of local congregations.

An ordinary theology of priesthood

The process of appointing a new priest, including the construction of the parish profile and a job description, had focussed the lay leaders' attention on what they desired of a priest. The diocesan initiative, *Transforming Presence*, (Diocese of Chelmsford, 2011), containing a realistic picture of the availability of

ordained leaders, had prompted them to consider why their church needed a priest at this time. The conversations were lively and informed and a picture of an ordinary theology (Astley 2002) of priesthood emerged. It identified three characteristics of the priestly role, which I have labelled sacramental, relational and representative.

A sacramental role

It might be expected that churches should have thought in the broadest terms about what they wanted in an ordained leader at the time of a new appointment, but I noted that much discussion about what was desirable was expressed in terms of the distinctive features of *priestly* ministry. Given the variety of churches represented, there was surprising agreement about the spiritual leadership that was required. This meant someone who could lead worship, especially innovations in worship (the 'technical knowledge' Wardens St Anna), to be the one who knew about the Bible and theology (Mr R., St Edward) and the one who could minister to the dying and the bereaved. A priest was needed for the sacramental aspect of this last task: the pastoral role could be the priest's task, but could also be shared with the laity. The work of the Vicar was, quite clearly, to be a priest. Comparison of workloads between churches was almost solely affected by how many services there were to take on a Sunday (Wardens, churches A and E) , but at St Benedict horror was expressed at the thought of a part-time priest, who might not be contactable *any* time during the week.

Bishop D. was to be a 'spiritual father' at St David. Some of the language in which this need was expressed appeared, at first hearing, to suggest an unhealthy dependence and unwillingness to accept responsibility for the local church. "Who's going to look after us.. that is, pray for us, and care for us when we are troubled, teach us, lead us and guide us, answer our difficult questions about faith and life, know the answers to legal questions about churchyards and faculties and weddings?" said Mr R. at St Edward's. As much of my work as an educator of individuals and congregations has been focussed on equipping church members

to have confidence to take a greater share of responsibility for their church, I found this hard to hear. Even those congregations with very active lay members knew that the surrounding community interpreted a clerical collar as 'the church.' "Who's going to be the public face of the church - the 'parson' that people in the village will know and recognise, even when they never come to church?" (St Elizabeth's). In order to fulfil this need priests will be required to inhabit a role that has been constructed by others. They would be the recipient of much transference and projection and both represent and be expected to activate religious feeling in others: the objectification of themselves (Hennessey, 2003). As Rev E. found, the parish often wanted her because she was the Vicar, not because of any personal qualities or past acquaintance: "it's not about your own individuality, but the role."

A relational role

A second, equally important, requirement was for the priest to be someone to whom it was easy to relate. Despite the necessity for the priestly sacramental role envisaged, the overwhelming impression from the conversations with lay leaders was that they were looking for someone with whom they could have a relationship, on a personal level rather than one solely dictated by role or task. This was expressed as someone who is "approachable," "easy to talk to," "someone who values us for ourselves, not just what we can do." (Wardens at churches A and B) The job, after all, required "empathy, working with people" (St Anna). It was apparent that the appointment of a new priest was the beginning of a new relationship in which people are investing a large amount of personal emotion. The new priest is to become an influential member of the local church, one with the potential to build up or destroy the relationships in it. The lay leaders, some of whom expressed their responsibility during the ministerial vacancy as keeping the peace and were now conscious of their accountability to the rest of the congregation, looked for "the popular choice," and, possibly, the safe one (St Agnes). There was much less talk of the desirable competencies in new appointees. The church that wanted someone who could "relate to young

people" (St Anna) appeared (perceived through adjacency pairings) to be reflecting their own lack of confidence and anxiety about an ageing congregation rather than any desire to engage in active youth work.

I could see that considerable anxiety surrounded the arrival of a new Vicar and any other inhabitants of the vicarage. It was expected that the relationship between the priest and his/her partner would set a pattern for relationships in the congregation. The interviewers at St Peter and St Chad had been frustrated by how little they could ask about about the new appointee's spouse having previously experienced the unease caused by having a minister whose marriage relationship was not healthy. At St Chad's the warm approachability of Rev C's wife was seen as a balance to his slightly frightening presence; it was anticipated she was someone who would contribute to the family-like nature of the church. I noted that the circumstances surrounding Rev A's divorce were known to some extent, being a local family, which might explain why fear was not expressed about the effect of a divorced priest there.

The overwhelming expectation was that there would be changes with the arrival of a new priest. Though the language describing this transition implies that the *vacancy* has been filled, the *interregnum* now ended and so a period of uncertainty and waiting has finished, the arrival of a new priest is itself an anxious time as lay people wait to see how their own ministry will be perceived by the new Incumbent. This newcomer could decide they should no longer preach or lead services, for example, and could have a significant effect on a pastoral or evangelistic ministry. Those who had a warm relationship with the departed priest may now be grieving a loss and even feel guilty if they make a new friendship. Some of the departures which are common as a new priest arrives may be due to this internal conflict (Jordan, 2008). The mixture of emotions was evident.

None of the churches that I visited were welcoming priests who had been part of their congregation. As the leadership of locally deployed ordained ministers develops it will be instructive to research whether comparative feelings

of hope, anxiety and personal investment are present. There was a great desire to be involved in the choice of a new priest, even when, as in St Anna and St Agnes, this meant that there were a large number at the social event and at St Brigid and St Benedict money was spent on advertising even though the Bishop had already sent someone to look at the post. This democratisation of the process was akin, it was said, to the changing sources of authority in a family, no longer governed by one patriarchal figure. It was a 'love match' rather than an 'arranged marriage' (Mr N., St Benedict). But while God was thanked for the congregation's answered prayers, there was no sense that the priest's authority came from this process. Words and practice affirmed that the authority to be the priest in each place came from the Bishop and the licence giving at the Institution.

Turning away from the elevated status that priests had enjoyed in the past also meant, for most lay leaders and priests, a rejection of the title of 'Father.' A 'parental' approach was paired with keeping or being dependent, being distant or wanting to keep control. Even at St David's, where it was natural to speak of the priest as a spiritual father, there was explicit rejection of the idea that "Father knows best." The changing role of fathers within families was reflected in the expectations of a church's spiritual father - to be approachable and informal, just as natural parents are now expected to relate to their children. The reality of the relationship still depended on the personality of the individual, so that a priest might have the title of Father but be too shy to act in this way (St Anna). The changing roles in society were evident: whilst there had been a time when the Vicar was 'well up' the ranking in the village of St Evelyn's, this was no longer the case.

There was no apparent awareness of the *prime facie* contradiction of wanting someone to act as object, standing for and activating internal religious feelings and the desire for a personal relationship. The surrounding community, it was believed, would also want a priest who was approachable, but one who was prepared to assume an established role regardless of individual personality. My own experience is that the balance of importance between these two

interpretations of the priest's role has changed even in my lifetime. The personal relationship has increased in significance and the priest whose ordinary humanity was not so apparent, the distant figure of authority, is less desirable. It is possible though, that the two are not incompatible, that the priest is still the object of projection, but that what is now projected is the expectation of a relationship that is intimate in a way that would not be expected of any other professional. I noted that at St Brigid the lay leaders managed to relate to the new Vicar both as a human being, needing assistance, and their leader, the new "boss." Those at St Chad demonstrated an ability to "separate the man from the priest," once he no longer had responsibilities for them. The lay leaders appeared confident that they could hold together the apparent contradiction of a sacramental and relational role.

A Representative Role

The third requirement common to the lay leaders was that they would find someone to fit with the culture of the local church, sharing their manner of worship and the local priorities. "The way we do things here" (St Agnes) included both internal and outward facing matters. "Fitting in with our behavioural patterns" (Mrs S., St Brigid) was not an expression of resistance to change, but of understanding the manner in which change was to be effected: through widespread consultation with the whole congregation as at St Chad, or through paying attention to the impact on the wider community as at St Brigid. There were, in most places, some non-negotiable elements of the story: the use of the Book of Common Prayer and the fixed pews at St Brigid, for example. I found the lay leaders very conscious of the continuing narrative of their church, (though usually reluctant to tell the newly appointed priests about previous history). They had each deliberately chosen the candidate that would fit their understanding of the unfolding story of the church, someone who would join the culture of the place but be different enough to lead them into the future. In this they had identified the need to find a leader who would "create, champion, and embed a sense of group identity of which they themselves are representative" (Haslam,

Reicher, and Platow, 2011). This position requires careful negotiation. At St Chad, for example, there were two apparently contradictory messages given about the role of the priest: to "lead and mould the congregation," but also to "fit in, not having an agenda." If the priest's 'agenda' is different from that of the congregation trouble may lie ahead, but if the leading and moulding represents a direction and shape that the congregation wants but doesn't have the capacity or courage to undertake themselves, a creative relationship may result. The lay leaders were ready to ask the priest to be "the one who persuasively draws together and holds the values of the community" (Greenwood, 1996, p.71). The comparison of St Chad's church to a train that had slowed to pick up another priest was an excellent example of the continuing story of the church being told in narrative form. As Bishop D expressed it, "each congregation has its own culture.. and you come as a student... a prayerful anthropologist."

The use of familial language

Many of the lay leaders found the language of family one which enabled them to express their understanding of priesthood. Rejecting the use of 'Father,' for example, the descriptions that were preferred were an elder brother, elder sister, a favourite aunt, always based on personal experience of good relationship with a real blood relation. These relationships were created in comparison with the natural relationships that had been experienced, rather than by comparison with stereotypes.

Meeting up with a former curate was described with pride as "our favourite daughter has done well" (Jordan, 2014, p.11) while, when a priest retired a Warden at St Brigid commented how hard it was for them to leave because, "when you are a priest, the church is your family." The evidence of this research is that use of family language was not a desire to return to an earlier, pastoral relationship of dependence on a father-like figure, but a re-creation of the notion of family. There was common agreement that it was much easier to discuss styles of leadership in this familial language than in abstract terms such as 'facilitative' or 'collaborative.' Other figurative language was occasionally used,

such as head teacher, or first amongst equals in senior management, but the language of friendship was seen as ambivalent. The lay leaders with one exception wanted to offer friendship to the priest, but were aware of the dangers of favouritism. Leadership would involve putting aside personal friendships (Mr O., St David, Mr R., St Edward).

A note on practices

Although my research consisted of conversations, practices were referred to which were indicative of beliefs held (Volf and Bass, 2001). In this area there was substantial agreement between lay and ordained leaders. Before the licensing service most of the priests followed custom and did not attend the church or churches to be they would be licensed, nor go to the PCC. Authority to chair the PCC would be bestowed by receiving the licence (Rev A and Wardens at church A) and competent leading of worship was an affirmation of this authority (St Brigid and St David). The significance of the leading of worship was also apparent at St Chad where there was concern that the priest was averse to wearing robes, which were seen to communicate holiness. I wasn't sure whether the robes signified holiness regardless of the wearer, or expressed the holiness of the wearer. It is possible that the speaker would not have made this distinction.

It was expected that the priests would get the vicarage, and especially the study, in order in the time between arrival and licensing. The occupation of the vicarage and preparation of it as a base for work was the first task of the priest. This suggests that reading, and necessary paperwork is integral to the priests' role. At St David's a delay in preparing the vicarage meant that it was not ready by the time of the licensing and this caused great anxiety, relieved when the priest was finally resident. It was said here that the appointment was not secure until the move had taken place. In places which shared one priest amongst several parishes, as in churches A and E, the place in which the vicarage was sited was seen as most important.

These conversations have revealed an ordinary theology of priesthood that is practical, relevant to the needs of the contemporary church and rooted in the culture of family and community. The lay leaders were looking for a priest who would fulfil a role that was sacramental, relational and representative. Where there were apparent contradictions in these roles the flexibility of the leaders was demonstrated, able to hold apparently inconsistent ideas at the same time.

The source of this theology of priesthood.

The lay leaders were aware of the desire of those who were not regular church-goers for a sacramental minister. Despite all the teaching of the Reformation, so far as I could understand, this role of the priest was to be a mediator between the people and God, needed to intercede, inhabit the vicarage, preside at the sacraments and assist in rites of passage. Buchanan writes of a deep-seated clericalism present in English society, resistant to even licensed lay ministry (1977) and there was evidence of this in some parishes, especially the more rural ones such as St Brigid and St Evelyn. It might be a matter of regret for the lay leaders, but they were aware that some residents of their parish would not accept ministry from a lay person. The anti-clericalism which has also been noted in English society (McLeod, 2011) may not be a denial of this but complementary: a recognition and resentment of the otherness of clergy which renders them 'not one of us.' (Jordan, 2008).

The lay leaders each mentioned the advice they had been given as they drew up their parish profiles. The Wardens at St Agnes told me that information and requests that they wanted to include were removed. This was an education in what the diocesan authorities thought they ought to be asking for. One of the theological colleagues, who has some involvement with parishes at this time, commented that he found it hard to focus the congregation's attention on areas in which the church wished to change. They were more likely to want to include a description of the kind of person they wanted and this sometimes resulted in what he would regard as tautologies: "a priest who prayed," for example

(Appendix Four, p.316). The sacramental and relational nature of the ordinary theology of priesthood (pp.117-118) suggests though, that the character of the priest counts for more than what he or she can achieve.

The diocesan document *Transforming Presence* (Diocese of Chelmsford, 2011) was several times given as the reason for anxiety about the availability of priests and a stimulus to consider their role (churches A. and E, Rev B), but the comments recorded also relate to the descriptions of the practical problems faced during the time without a priest. These had clearly confirmed the churches' need of one and gave the clearest indication of the role to be filled.

The lay leaders needed a trained professional because church life was so complicated. The language of worship and churchmanship was inaccessible ("priest-speak," Mrs S., St Brigid) and someone trained by the institution was required to manage the institution's demands for records, reports and applications for changes to the church building. A theologically articulate administrator who could both handle the present day material and set vision for the future was required. The expectation amongst several of the lay leaders, encouraged I think by the diocesan staff, was that without such a leader there was a real threat of anarchy and conflict (Wardens, St Edward and St Elizabeth). The use of the term 'interregnum' expresses this.

The fact that the preferred term is now 'ministerial vacancy' did not greatly affirm the role of the lay leaders, implying as it does that they could not act in a ministerial capacity. The contrast between a lay ministry and that of the priest was described by Mr O. at St David as "being a manager for God" rather than the Father of the church family or by the Mrs S. at St Brigid as "treading water" rather than giving "spiritual leadership."

I did not hear any reference to the ordination service from the lay leaders, but as they would only be likely to attend if there was a curate in their parish, this was not surprising. Most could also not remember the words of the licensing service of their previous Incumbent and their comments on the one they had just

organised related to the matters they had responsibility for: the invitations, the seating and the refreshments. The words of these liturgical occasions, which establish the official Anglican theology of priesthood, had passed them by.

A theology of the local congregation

Though aware of the needs of the wider parish, it was as representatives of the local congregation that the lay leaders to whom I spoke had acted at the time of appointment. As the congregation assumes a much greater significance as the sign, instrument and foretaste of God's mission (Newbigin, 2009), it was instructive to listen to the ecclesiology that they expressed. I was struck by the images that they used, principally that of family. I observed how a new interpretation of an image could affect a change in perception and practice. These are indeed the "metaphors we live by," in Lakoff and Johnson's terms (2003).

The transition in understanding within the Church of England from one in which the church can be assumed to be the church for the whole nation, divided into parish units which cover the country, to one in which churchgoing and membership is a matter of choice for individuals and families, has been examined at length (Croft, 2006, Ecclestone 1998). As the congregation as an entity has acquired theological and missional significance (Chapter One, p. 13), so lay Christians have looked for a way to distinguish between the church, the parish and the worshipping congregation. For many the preferred metaphor to talk about the latter was that of a family.

The significance of this language was evident as several groups of lay leaders continued to use it at the joint meeting, even when instructed not to by their new priests (S Agnes and St Anna, St Chad). The lay leaders, who were much more inclined to speak in the first person plural, needed a language to describe the local church and found both the relationality and the complexity of modern families made the language apposite. It was used in a variety of ways, ranging from intentional theological affirmation to less considered metaphor.

Familial language was used intentionally at St Chad because the departed Vicar, much loved, had encouraged the congregation to think of themselves as God's children and to address each other as 'sister' and 'brother.' This was a largely white congregation, though close geographically to many black led and Pentecostal churches who habitually use such terms to express their sense of fellowship with each other (Cartledge, 2010). These lay leaders interpreted this as affirmation of their membership in the Christian family, with one heavenly Father. It gave identity, dignity and a sense of equality in a congregation which was neither professional nor high achieving.

The only other place which strongly affirmed the theological reasons for calling the congregation the family was St David's, with a large multi-ethnic congregation. The language, which both the priest and the lay leader said was "non-negotiable," identified the common heritage of all church members in their Christian faith, regardless of ethnic background.

"The church family" was referred to elsewhere to denote those who were part of the regular worshipping congregation, rather than occasional visitors, or residents of the parish. This family could transcend space and time just as an ordinary family could and it was apparent that the boundaries were very fluid. Those who were not present because of sickness, geographical distance and death could be included and someone outside the family circle might be unaware into which category absentees fell. Changing patterns of attendance and of belonging could be accommodated. The model was of an extended family, not a nuclear one; the Mrs J. at St Anna spoke of her awareness that "ordinary families are changing, with step parents and children and so on, and so is the church family." Mr M. at St Benedict acknowledged that there were often tensions in the church family, just as in any family: it was the strength of the feelings involved that made family language necessary. So though several people acknowledged the complexity and possible pain of family language, neither a voluntary club, nor a charitable or action group were anything like a satisfactory description of the church.

Though no-one used systems language, this was what was described, a complex emotional system, with interrelated and interdependent relationships. Mr M. identified those who took roles in the congregation, as pacifiers or agitators, but it was more common to hear that those who identified their congregation as a family had not thought at all of differentiations between the members. The use of family language differed from the analysis of the congregation in the way that Bridgebuilders, for example, uses Friedman's adaptation of Bowen's theory of family systems (1985). Family systems as applied to congregations (Friedman 1985, Steinke 1993), has been written from the leaders' perspective. This research has shown that when the congregation is able to talk about itself the interrelation of birth family and of church family are as real for them as for the ordained leader, but not identical.

One difference was that it was often the corporate identity of the church that was described, rather than individual relationships within it. Three sets of lay leaders, those at St Agnes, St Anna and St Chad referred to their own action and that of the church in the first person plural when describing their contests with "the diocese." Each felt the need to assert the particular needs of their church. The sense of being a special case was strong: the selection process would need to be flexible to accommodate them; special arrangements would need to be made. It was the local church when in opposition to another body, rather the wider church represented by the diocese, which was one family.

When particular relationships were described the links between the family of the church, the natural nuclear family and relations in the local community were intertwined. It was natural to give some people honorary family names: 'aunty,' 'gran,' as some in the community and in the church acted as support for others. This was valued both by those whose own birth family was negligent or dysfunctional and by those who had deliberately sought out a church with older members so that their children, who lived far from their own extended family, could adopt substitute grandparents, aunts and uncles. Having been freely chosen, these relationships could be based on an idealised family member. The

interaction between relationships in the church family and in birth families in the church and local community were acknowledged to be fraught with complications, as birth relationships might be unknown to the casual eye. The Wardens told me that Rev A. was appointed partly on the basis that she was a village person and would understand the existence of such inter-connections. The language was used consciously by people in both literal and metaphorical ways. Both churches that strongly affirmed the theological justification for family language (churches C and D), also claimed the literal support of birth family members was essential for flourishing and even survival. Where this was absent the 'church family' was needed.

The purpose of the theologies of congregation

Ordinary theology, claims Astley, is concerned with establishing what is meaningful in the speaker's own life (2002, p.70). Most of those lay people who spoke of their churches as families thought of this as a positive attractive feature: "we care for each other" was the common adjacency pair. A supportive network was of prime importance. The extent of this interaction varied between churches and I noted some variance from Becker's analysis and labelling of North American churches (1999). The churches that she classified as 'family' were not those that were most supportive of each other, but who were unconsciously so, as support was unplanned and spontaneous, and did not necessarily imply close friendship or intense time commitment. In some ways, church members were treated as members of a family, to be helped when needed, but not the prime focus of one's life. I think that the family label in this country leads to more conscious support. One lay person attributed his own appreciation of God's fatherhood to the fact that he was adopted and had high expectations of how the church family should behave (Appendix Four, p.317). If, in a post Christendom society, a Christian community is now a fragmented minority, such a social identity gives support and meaning (McGuire, 1987, p.47). What other model could be chosen of a group of people, of diverse ages, gender and social background? Neither a campaigning group, nor focused on a hobby, together church members experienced the

Christian liturgy, especially at key moments of birth, marriage and death and worked together to support their church and the neighbouring community.

The one lay man who disliked the use of family language did so on the basis that it would impede the church's function. It might be that others thought the church's function was precisely that: to be a family, providing support and fellowship.

It was also instructive to note what I did not hear. I found no echo of the connection established in ecumenical discussions between baptism and Christian ministry (WCC, 1982). Reflecting on this, Pickard notes that, even though many theologies of the laity begin with baptism, lay people are more likely to interpret it as the beginning of membership of the church than of ministry (2009, p.17). Baptism establishes a relationship with each other, not a commission for a role.

I also heard no echoes of other descriptions of the local church, such as that identified by Becker: 'House of Worship,' the 'Community' and the 'Leader' (1999). Nor was there a difference in the language used of a large church and a smaller one. The perception of the theological colleagues to whom I spoke was that, rather than size, what was influential was the intentional structures that framed church life (Appendix Four, p.316). A church with a membership of over a thousand could be a family if it had structures that facilitated communication and meeting in supportive groups.

Familial language was used in a variety of ways, that is, in a literal sense, as a metaphor, as a model and as a theological reality. For many church members the literal sense was real: there were close associations between their birth families and church as they had begun to attend with their parents, or following a baptism, wedding or funeral. 'Family services' had begun to be held in the mid twentieth century so that families would be able to worship together, rather than the children sent to Sunday School. It was natural, then for church members to transfer this literal language about their birth families to other members of the congregation, and wider community, as they acquired honorary grandparents,

aunts and uncles. The description of the church as a family is further application of this metaphor, intended to describe a community that is acting as an extended and alternative family. The model is undergirded by the theological justification, found in Biblical and liturgical texts. This diverse use of language did not appear to create confusion among those to whom I spoke and could result in a rich interchange of ideas. It could though, be confusing for visitors: at a funeral I attended during the course of this research I noted the discomfort amongst the bereaved as the deceased was referred to as 'our brother N.' (Jordan, 2014, p.10). Visitors to the church's services may also find the language confusing and clergy are clearly worried that it would sound as though those not in nuclear families were not included and welcomed.

I concluded that family language about the church allows conversation about the congregation as a place of relationships, rather than structures, common interests or other common experiences or backgrounds. Church members, aware of changing nature of family lives through their own experience, or because of changing attendance patterns, were seeing comparable change in the church family, and adapting accordingly.

Source of understanding of a theology of the local congregation.

It did not prove possible to discern whether the understanding that the church is a family was drawn first from Biblical and liturgical teaching, or whether the association with birth families preceded this. Many, indeed, had first attended church with their birth families, brought or sent by parents, and some were in congregations where there were still quite complex blood relationships between members. It is doubtful whether the participants themselves could have disentangled the influences on them. The influence of Biblical material and the liturgy, particularly as it occurs in the baptism service, was volunteered as justification for the familial language used by the lay leaders at St Chad and St David and these sources were evident in others participant's theologies of the congregation. Speaking of the church as a family certainly has good Biblical and

liturgical roots, both of which will have fed the imagination of Anglican congregations.

The story of the extended family of Abraham, which becomes the Jewish nation, is also formative for Christians who are to see themselves as 'joint heirs' to the promise to Abraham (Romans 8: 17). Perhaps partly because the Jewish Scriptures are the story of a family, mention of father, mother, brother and sister are frequent. The command to honour your mother and father (Exodus 12: 20) is matched by the obligation to look after members of the family, and other relationships, such as that between a junior and a senior adviser, are described as between a father and a son, (e.g. Elijah to Elisha 2 Kings 2:12). God is described as the Father of the nation, a protector, to be acknowledged and obeyed and the future Messiah, will be the 'Everlasting Father' (Isaiah 9 6). God will also comfort the nation like a mother (Isaiah 66: 13).

Jesus' sermon recorded in Matthew's gospel instructs his followers to imitate their 'Father in Heaven' (Matthew 5: 45 and 48) and this is how He is to be addressed in prayer (Matthew 6: 9, Luke 11: 2). As believers gather together they are "worshipping one heavenly Father, and sharing the inheritance of God's Son, Jesus Christ." (John 1: 12). A new family is created, one marked by obedience to Christ, not blood relations (Matthew 12: 46-50).

Paul, the former Pharisee, wrestling with the identity of the new Christian community which contains Gentiles as well as Jews, writes of this new family, created by God (2 Corinthians 6:18). Care for those in the 'family of faith' is now especially important (Galatians 6:10). Both the letter to the Hebrews and the author of the letters of John appreciate the significance of this new family, created by God through Christ (e.g. Hebrews 2:11, 1 John 3:1). In the new Christian family the fatherhood of God creates equality and there are no distinct roles assigned to individuals or groups. No-one, indeed, is to be given a particular title, as all are children of God (Matthew 23: 9).

A comparison of the use of family and friendship language in the Bible indicates that a relationship with God, whether as part of His chosen people or as the redeemed people of God in Christ, does not alter the nature of our friendship with each other. But a relationship with God does profoundly alter family relationships. The widening of family language to include some individuals (Jonathan, 2 Samuel 1: 26 and Elijah, 2 Kings 2:12) is extended to all those for whom God is Father. And rather than God being known as Father only to one race, all those who are one with Christ are one with the Father. Christ is the firstborn in a large family, and care for members of that family for each other is now as much a religious duty as care for one's natural family was in the Old Covenant (1 Peter 5: 9, 1 Corinthians 5: 10). The common understanding of the Biblical teaching amongst the lay leaders, though, had its limits. I heard no-one go as far as Jesus did in his repudiation of the claims of his natural family (Matthew 12: 48, 49) and church members assumed that the church supported them in their care of their relatives.

It is now common for baptisms to take place in main Sunday worship, and the Church of England website explains that this is so: "your child can be seen to be joining the family of the church and be welcomed into membership" (2014). But liturgical revision has moved away from many overt references to family. In 1967 the Series 2 Baptism service contained the words of welcome, said by all: "We welcome you into the Lord's family, We are children of the same Heavenly Father" This was repeated in the Alternative Service Book (ASB) (Church of England, 1980). But the words of Common Worship, are "'we welcome you into the fellowship of faith; we are children of the same heavenly Father" (Church of England, 1998). The reference to the church as God's family has been dropped and membership of God's family may be interpreted as an individual identity.

In the ASB the words to those children old enough to understand were: "N, when you are baptized, you become a member of a new family. God takes you for his own child and all Christian people will be your brothers and sisters" (Church of England, 1980). There is no equivalent in Common Worship.

The most influential part of the liturgy, repeated at every service, is the Lord's Prayer, beginning "Our Father" (Matthew 6: 9-13, Luke 11: 2-4). I have been surprised, therefore, to note the energetic rejection of this language by clergy on successive occasions, both in the joint meetings with lay leaders and in conversation with theological colleagues (Appendix Four), with the Chelmsford curates (Jordan 2014, p.9), and the Chelmsford Theological Society (Chelmsford Cathedral, 2015). In comparison, those without formal theological training appeared to have grasped a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, the identity of the congregation as the adopted family of God. This ecclesiology is consonant with the theological voice in the theoretical framework for this research, which identifies the church as the expression of the relational life of the Trinity (Chapter Two, p. 26-28).

I was not able to explore the rich seam of the implicit theology of the local congregation revealed by its practices (Percy, 2010). I noted though, that some activities that were mentioned in conversation demonstrated the attitudes held. At St Anna, for example, the congregation had called their priests 'Father' in the past, but I heard no regret that the appointment of a women priest would end this custom, nor suggestion that Rev A. should be called 'Mother.' The only reference to her gender was a comment that, as she was recently divorced, she would need extra help moving furniture into the vicarage. While one might assume that the use of family language would force people into gender specific roles, this was further evidence that the description of the local church as a family did not extend to providing exact parallels.

The perspective of academic theology

The record of the conversations has indicated two areas of asymmetry in clergy and lay understanding: of the role of the priest and of the nature of the local church. I am aware that the clerical contribution may not be counted as their considered, definitive views: it has been a reaction to the lay views expressed. It is, though, in Astley's terms, 'academic theology,' the fruit of academic study

(2002) and may be compared with the ordinary theology of those who had no academic training.

The understanding of priesthood

All those who are ordained will have spent considerable time during the selection process and their training in examination of the academic theology of priesthood. This will have happened repeatedly: in initial interviews with Vocations Advisers, in a semi-formal essay written in preparation for the residential selection conference and then at the conference, in interview with the Bishops' Advisers. An extensive booklist will have been supplied (Church of England 2004 b). While some allowance is made for the different ecclesiological backgrounds from which candidates come, it is required, especially from those candidates who have exercised a significant lay role, that they are able to justify their sense of calling to an altered form of ministry, a changed ontology. Following a period of ordination training, spent largely with other ordinands, the Church of England's ordination service emphasises the dependence of the congregation on their 'shepherd' (Ordinal 2011). Many of the priests to whom I spoke kept a copy of their ordination vows with them, in written or electronic form and I have presumed this background to be the influential source of their views.

Their understanding of their own role, shaped by this background, was that they would be the leaders of the churches to which they had been appointed. None expressed an expectation that lay leaders would be more competent in some areas, or an awareness that some areas properly belonged to the laity, as established in Anglican practice and history (Avis, 2002, see Chapter One, pp. 9-11). Their authority for their leadership came from the Bishop, not the congregation.

The process of selection, training and ordination emphasises their distinctiveness from the laity. With the exception of one priest, Bishop D., they did not express an expectation that they were becoming part of an existing community and they reacted adversely to the use of familial language to describe the local congregation.

The two priests who rebuked their new lay colleagues for their use of familial language were divorcees. Both recognised it had coloured their thinking. They expected, however, that this experience would be one shared with other members of the church and so the language of family, which could upset those whose family life was not life-giving, would be ill advised. The experience of family was too diverse, Rev C thought, to be a useful description as it would be interpreted in so many different ways. He acknowledged, though, the congregation's 'emotional radar', believing that his relationship with his second spouse had to be good for the sake of his effective leadership and the health of relationships in the congregation.

The second priest, Rev A, who was averse to family language thought the language of friendship was greatly preferable. In the Jewish Scriptures, only a very few individuals are described as the friend of God, such as Moses (Exodus 33:11) and Abraham (James 2:23). If friends are mentioned they appear after a list of family relations (e.g. Deut. 13:6). Jesus calls those close to him his friends (John 15: 15) and this was the reason for Rev A's own preference for this language. (My immediate reaction was that this was another example of clergy's over-identification with Jesus!) It is, in fact only in John's Gospel that friendship is used as a marker of a new relationship with God, (John 15: 13-15). In Matthew and Luke 'friend' is a title of address used by Jesus, though not a mark of close intimacy (e.g. Luke 5: 20 or 12:14).

Some other models of leadership were suggested. These models came from business, both self-employed and as a consultant, from school, from sports and from medicine. The same image could be used in a variety of ways. Midwife, for example, was seen as a nurturing and enabling role by Rev B but one of restrictive professional competence by Rev E. The gendered nature of some traditional images, especially that of shepherd, was noted. These non-family models were much less personal images and, indeed, one priest, Rev C., made the point in the joint meeting that he did not want a warm relationship that might prevent him making tough decisions and giving bad news. Acknowledging that

ordained ministry is primarily about people, Rev C. and Rev E., both spoke about the value of their experience in business in terms of the skills it had given them in working with people.

Speaking six months after the licensing service, priests who had recently been curates spoke of the considerable difference that holding pastoral charge made, describing it in terms of responsibility and realising that they held the vision and identity of the church. Rev E. noted the inadequacy of models from business and industry (which she had relied on) to describe her new, public role. She found it "scary" that others invested so much in her; that they were so grateful she just "turned up" for events. In contrast to the lay leaders' views, most priests did not express their understanding of their role in sacramental terms. Their expectation of themselves was that they had been appointed to change the situation at the church; the only question was how long they would wait before doing this. Their role in relation to the congregation was to act as the trainer of the team, the midwife, the one who would equip others.

I have already indicated that in practice the clerical and lay views of priorities and customs was closer than the views articulated in speech (Chapter Five, p. 122). There was agreement in each place about the activities of the newly arrived priest and the proper restrictions on his or her authority. As we were talking about the activities in which the priest would engage in this time of transition I noted that the priests themselves placed more significance on whether or not they were wearing a clerical collar than the lay leaders did. The priests apparently thought they were not on official business when not wearing clerical collar as, for example, when they went to a service or met the parishioners before they were licensed, when it was seen as a barrier (Rev C.). The lay leaders did not comment on any difference, at St Brigid, for example, referring to the arrival of the priest at a service before licensing as the presence of 'the boss.'

I did note contradictions between the practice of the clergy and their declared intention to be an enabling, collaborative leader. Meetings were arranged, for example, without consultation with the lay people to be involved, the engineering of the election of Churchwardens admitted and lay leaders' preferred way of expressing the nature of the church corrected (Revs A., C. and E.). This last phenomena, repeated several times, exemplified Healy's assertion that church is treated as a school, where the ordained leadership are the teachers (2004, p.14). Such a public rebuke from one adult to another after so short an acquaintance signified a rapid assumption of authority. There are few other situations in which this could be tolerated, but it was not challenged and it seemed that the priest had assumed the role of parent even while rejecting the language.

Academic ecclesiology

The ecclesiology expressed by the clergy was a response to the language used by their lay leaders. They were, largely, not as attracted to the idea of the local congregation as a family as were the lay leaders, were much more likely to object to this language and, indeed, two priests, Revs A. and C., attempted to silence their lay leaders during the joint meetings.

Bishop D., the one priest who was unequivocally in favour of familial language gave a theological justification: "we are all children of the same heavenly Father." He was from another part of the Anglican Communion and was now Vicar of a large, multi-ethnic church.⁴ The objections of others were all based on comparison with a traditional nuclear family, rather than Biblical or theological objections. The consensus on this issue prompted consideration of fashions in theological language. Bishop D. had trained in Britain in the 1980s, when family

⁴ The use of family language to describe the Anglican Communion is still current and was displayed in the Church of England Newspaper when the report of provision for those who cannot accept Women Bishops was justified because "we do not throw out members of the family" (Dales 2014)

services were common and the language of family was heard in the Alternative Service baptism liturgy (Chapter Five, p.132).

Clergy resistance to family language indicated their perspective, concerned as much for those outside the regular church congregation as in it. This was confirmed as I talked to curates who were in the process of looking for their next parish: they wanted to see if there were opportunities for outreach in places like a school, hospital, hospice, or new housing estate and were most concerned that the existing congregation would not be a barrier to new attendees. From their point of view, any new members would be more likely to be shaped by their ideas and be open to new ideas, than the existing congregation. It was, therefore, important not to communicate exclusiveness with language of family (Jordan 2014, p.9).

Only a few lay members of the congregation have as wide a perspective on the church as members of the clergy. For most lay people, their congregation is their place of belonging and identity formation. Clergy, aware of the diocese, the national and even international church, are less likely to invest so much emotional energy in the internal dynamic of one congregation. Those who had moved from a set of friends would find it much easier to make new friendships with fellow clergy than with the congregation. I found, for example, that I had to resist an assumption on the part of clergy that I would sympathise with them in their situation. On the evidence of this research, clergy relate primarily to the parish and locality rather than to the congregation (Cobb, 1998). Cameron asks whether the congregation are colleagues or clients (1999). Rev C., Rev B., Rev A. and Bp D. believed their role was to nurture and educate the congregation, but for several of the priests it appeared that the congregation could also be the obstacle to the work that was to be done in the parish. The congregation can, indeed, sometimes become the place of contest and the curates acknowledged a tendency to blame the congregation when things go wrong (Jordan, 2014, p.9). The clash between the pastoral and prophetic role for clergy, pressured both to care for their congregations and to challenge them to act as agents of God's mission can create

both internal and external conflict (Dempsey, 1969). The *Trajectory of Vocations* report, examining the attitudes of clergy between selection for ordination training and first incumbency (Church of England, 2011a p. 2) notes that priests' understanding of their role narrows. It often results in priests choosing either a ministry of presence in the community or one of building the church community in numbers, faith and witness. The report found little or no sense that the first could be achieved through nurturing the second. One of the curates remarked: "For them it's a hobby, for us it is our lives" (Jordan, 2014, p.9). They shared Atkins' view that the reasons why people volunteer in church are more likely to be social, seeking a sense of belonging or satisfying an obligation, than religious (2006).

After our conversation had alerted clergy to its presence, though, several colleagues told me that they used familial language for pragmatic reasons. Prayers for the deceased, sick or distant members might refer to the church family, as distinct from those in the general population and the church was referred to as a family when trying to draw the congregation together; a joint building project, for example, when there is a need for a corporate effort and there will be contact with many others who are not 'family' (Appendix Four, p.313). A church plant could be seen as a member of the family branching out on their own; a 'daughter church' supported by the 'parent church,' while it was noted that the diocesan parish share in Chelmsford Diocese used to be called 'The Family Purse.' Some churches continued to refer to family services, an innovation of the mid 1960s, though this had mostly been replaced with 'All-Age worship.' Bishop Stephen's habit of addressing congregations and synods as 'sisters and brothers' had been noticed (Appendix Four, p.318). The grave reservations that the clergy had about familial language did not stop them making some use of it in their practice.

The process and content of the conversations between lay and ordained leaders

I have examined both the process of carrying out conversations between lay and ordained leaders in order to see what such meetings enable them to say to each other, and the content of those conversations, in order to identify the theologies of priesthood and of the local congregation that have been communicated.

The process of carrying out a conversation between ordinary and academic theology.

While Astley argues that ordinary theology should be allowed to critique academic theology (2004) such a conversation rarely takes place. It is much more likely that those trained in an academic mode will attempt to correct those who present an alternative view (Healy, 2004, p.14). I acted as a chair of the discussions and on several occasions had to ask the priest to be quiet so that the voices of others could be heard. Congregations are, most of the time, passive listeners to sermons and even in the informal setting of a Bible study, the clerical view of what is correct dominates (Village, 2007). The attempted silencing of the lay leaders by their newly appointed priest demonstrated how easily ordinary theology can be submerged if not given preferential treatment.

The recommended form of meeting

The process which I initiated and enabled was appreciated by the participants for a number of reasons, but it also had its flaws. At the meetings I asked for immediate feedback and the most common reaction was that the meetings were 'very affirming.' Lay leaders said that they had a clearer understanding of what they believed after they had been asked to articulate it. In Parishes A, B and C the conversation was used to agree that the right appointment had been made, and this was appreciated by the new priest. Indeed, clergy appeared particularly appreciative. Several said they valued the opportunity to 'think aloud,' examining their own thoughts about their future role. Both Rev B. and Rev C. changed the model that had guided them after the joint meeting. Rev C. and Bp D. used the

meeting with me to reflect theologically on God's direction to them to their appointment, drawing together several strands of their experience.

The joint meeting also gave the opportunity for one priest, Rev C., to see how he fitted into the narrative of the church's life, building on his predecessor's work. In several cases it was the first time this grouping, which was likely to be the ministerial team for the church, had gathered. Rev A. and Rev C. said that, despite moments of apparent tension during the joint meeting conversations, in the subsequent six months with their lay colleagues had referred to that meeting as a positive experience. They were seen as having created a sense of joint ownership of the future and to have established a way of addressing possible conflicts in the future. Rev A. noted how the lay leaders were open with her about their expectations and thought this was due in part to the conversations that were held.

It was clear, however, that the process had weaknesses. I noted that many of the lay leaders, Churchwardens and parish representatives, expressed their weariness at the first meeting. My request to meet was 'the last thing we wanted' (Mrs S., St Brigid). In Parishes B. and E. it was extremely difficult to arrange a meeting. The lay leaders had brought one piece of work, the selection of a new priest, to a satisfactory conclusion and were now planning the licensing service. In this interim period it was clearly hard for some to recall the process of construction and the details of the parish profile and too soon to focus on their hopes for the long term future. I noted, though that some of the language which had been used at this first meeting was later used at the joint meeting with the newly appointed priest, and so the meetings may have served as a way of practising the vocabulary (for example, Mrs J. at St Anna talking about a priest as "a favourite aunt"). On the other hand, lay leaders who had not been present at the first meeting were able to contribute at the second, without apparent disadvantage. There were no apparent contradictions between what was said at the first meeting and what was said at the joint meeting: the lay leaders were ready to speak freely in front of their new priest, even when later corrected. The

research process had not included seeking feedback from the lay participants about the value of the meeting apart from a question to all present at the joint meeting. Each time I asked at this meeting about the value of the whole process responses were given in terms of the value of the joint meeting.

The meetings with the lay leaders on their own were invaluable for me as a researcher. They gave me a necessary insight into the recent past of the church, the relations between the lay leaders and the individual churches. But my conclusion as a practitioner is that I do not now consider them essential to accomplish the task of fostering good relations between ordained and lay leaders though facilitating a conversation about models of leadership. The timing strained already stretched people and analysis of the texts does not indicate that the conversation at the joint meeting would have been significantly different if they had been omitted.

This conclusion surprises me, as I had assumed that the lay leaders would benefit from an opportunity to discuss matters in the absence of an ordained leader. But the scripts indicate that what they valued was a *facilitated* conversation, the presence of a third person (St Anna, At Agnes, St Chad). So though I have considered recommending that a meeting with the lay leaders only takes place after the licensing, before a joint meeting, I am now recommending two joint meetings, to happen in the first months after licensing. The first of these should occur as soon as possible; within a couple of weeks and the second within a couple of months.

Those clergy who were moving from a curacy to a first position of responsibility for a church expressed appreciation of the meeting with me most warmly. They said that they gave them an opportunity to talk about their hopes and fears and to consider the new role they needed to adopt (Rev B., Rev C., Rev E.). When I contacted them six months after the initial meetings they said they had continued to think about the conversation and that their practice had been affected. The meeting had come at exactly the right time for them, located in

their new homes, but providing a break in the tedium of unpacking belongings, before they had begun licensed ministry. The value of meeting in their own homes was incalculable as no control could be made, but it was important for two priests to wait until they had moved before they met me since they would then have said farewell to their former parish and begin to think about the new (Rev B. Rev E.). Two of the curates reflected on how they would miss the supervision meetings they had benefitted from as curates: this meeting may have reminded them of the value of those and indicated the importance of continuing in some form of supervision in the future. I understand that those newly in charge are visited by an Archdeacon six months after the licensing service, but this is not an opportunity to talk about styles of leadership.

It is apparent that some of the topics introduced at the meetings engaged the participants more than others. There was congruence between the priest's readiness to talk about their journey towards the appointment, which occurred most frequently during the individual meeting and the lay leaders' desire to affirm that they had chosen (or God had sent) the right person (St Brigid, St Benedict, St Chad). When these were brought together at the joint meeting the priest was much affirmed and a positive foundation laid as the beginning of a shared narrative was created. Unless such a meeting takes place there is no place in the normal run of committees for this interchange of calling, need, response and collaboration.

I had thought that asking about the appointment process would be the first step in finding out what was looked for in a priest. In fact the narratives which were told to me appeared to serve mainly to emphasise the particular needs of the congregation and the inadequacies of the diocese. They did indicate some of the reasons for the choice of the priest, but risked creating a sense of solidarity only through negative comment on the diocese. It was hard for the lay leaders to distinguish between the contents of the parish profile and the advice given in its construction and the details of the interview day. This subject needs careful handling in any future meeting. My proposal is that, as both lay and ordained

leaders are present, the conversation is an exploration of how each interpreted the profile and how its aims may be achieved: a more forward looking perspective.

I did, however, note the lay leaders' reluctance to tell the new priest about the past, though this could help them to understand the culture of the community which they were joining. I suggest that the facilitated conversations contain some information about the relationship which the former priest had with the church, and the effect of the language which has been used in the past.

One priest (Rev A.) would have particularly valued discussion about her deanery role, which had clearly been glossed over in discussion between the lay leaders and diocesan representatives. Rev B. also wanted to talk about the expectations on her as part-time in the parish. The leaders at St Benedict expressed a clear desire for a full-time priest, while there was anxiety at St Chad and St David about the priest being diverted from the parish to other responsibilities. How, the Warden at St Brigid said, could a priest be part-time when it was a vocational role? Both Rev E. and the Warden at St Edward found it hard to see how the priestly role could be fulfilled in a ever expanding parish when the core task was to relate to people on a personal level. There is a clear value in a discussion about expectations of work to be done, time shared between churches in the same benefice and any extra parochial responsibilities so as to pre-empt future misunderstandings. These initial facilitated meetings could be used to establish a pattern for lay leaders and ordained to work together when such a discussion became necessary. Indeed, at least two parishes (St Agnes, St Anna and St Chad) liked the combative nature of the meeting, saying it gave them confidence about discussions in the future. A facilitated conversation, ensuring all voices were heard, could establish a pattern for future discussions amongst themselves.

The discussion of models of leadership at the joint meeting was particularly appreciated by the lay leaders: "an opportunity to step back from the

immediate and urgent tasks and think about the bigger picture" (Mrs J., St Agnes). Lay leaders, in contrast to clergy, do not often get the opportunity to do this. I was also aware how much they wanted to enquire about the involvement of the priest's spouse and the use of the vicarage, but was prevented from doing so at the interview. It is useful for those newly appointed to know what their predecessors did and to be able to explain their own attitudes.

The pattern of meetings:

I have suggested that two joint meetings take place, one as soon as possible after the licensing service and one six to eight weeks later.

The following topics could be included in the first meeting:

Recollection of the shared narrative of the priest's calling to the church and the process of interview and appointment.

Interpretation of the needs of the church, expressed in the parish profile

Space given to the lay leaders to describe what they value about congregational life, including the use of family language if that is appropriate.

At the second meeting:

Information about past use of the vicarage and the involvement of the priest's spouse can be shared and the new priest explain his or her position.

A discussion about styles of leadership, using familial language, other models, or literal language, as appropriate.

The content of the conversation between ordinary and academic theology

In this conversation between lay and ordained leaders in the church I have adopted Astley's label of 'ordinary theology (2002) ,' to group together all those views of the role of priests and of the local church which have come from those without formal theological training. My account of the conversations has begun with a description of this ordinary theology and the reaction of the ordained leaders to it. In this, unusually, the lay Christians have set the agenda, but I do not doubt the clergy would have been able to present a more considered

ecclesiology if requested. I have not, however, attempted to examine what they might have said if so asked, but recorded what was said in these particular conversations. Within the theological framework employed, the manner of the doing of theology is significant, and this study has been grounded in an understanding of theology as participative, paying attention to practice and speech as well as the written word (Chapter One, p.27). Since examination of ordinary theology has usually been carried out by those trained in academic theology it is necessary to guard against reading into it identical or even comparable assumptions and frameworks. Astley recommends bringing the different voices of theology alongside each other, structuring a conversation (2004, pp 45-54), and this is precisely what this piece of research has achieved.

If ordinary theology is to critique academic, as well as vice versa, Astley advises the researcher to identify what is of value and significance, noting the importance of metaphors used and figures of speech, as these will form a bridge between ordinary and academic or ecclesiastical theology (2004, p.52). I have identified the use of the language of family as a way of exploring both the ordinary theology and the academic theology represented in these conversations. Familial language is a vocabulary shared by both sociologists and theologians when describing congregations (Chapter Two, pp 37-41), and its use by those without academic training demonstrates the value of attending to the voice of ordinary theologians.

Dempsey perceived a growing theological distance between clergy and laity and attributed this to the increasing professionalisation of ministry (1969). Clergy may now no longer be distant because of class or education, but because of their training. If they believe, as Jarvis suggests, that their views arise from a rational belief system whilst those of the congregation are a mixture of Christianity and folk religion there is much to discourage the clergy from listening to their congregation and empathising with their view of the nature of the church (1976).

Though it should not be assumed that the clergy's views were solely derived from their academic training, since there could be a residual understanding of the church drawn from the same sources as the congregation before their formal theological education, it appeared that one effect of theological training was to give priority to what *ought* to be the case in church, rather than what *is*. Several of the discussions in the summer reflected this distinction, as I presented what had been said to be met with what ought to have been said. Normative theology has long assumed that where there is conflict between the views of those who have received a ministerial training and those who have not, it is the former which should be accepted. Theologians are "increasingly interested in practice, culture and the embodied social nature of doctrine and the church" (Ward, 2012), yet may still assume that what is learned in theological training should then be used to correct the errors of members of congregations (Healy, 2004, p.14). Conversation with my theological colleagues assisted clarification about the rationale for resistance of clergy to family language. It was apparent that recent trends in theological discussion and priorities in parish development had made this language less desirable. While the ordinary theology of the lay leaders focussed on how they experienced their congregation's life, the clergy had studied how the church ought to behave. This made it possible for clergy to deny the validity of language that was describing a lived reality.

The primary reason given by my ministerial colleagues for resistance to description of the local church as a family was a concern for mission to the community beyond the church (Appendix Four, p.313). It was on the basis that a 'family church' was seen as too inward looking, too self-contained and liable to exclude those who were not yet members that the lay leaders at St Agnes, St Anna and St Chad were told not to describe the church as family. It was feared that it would anchor the church in a patriarchal view of society since many people do not now live in traditional family units (Chelmsford Cathedral, 2015). The expectation appeared to be that the congregation was transposing an idealised or

outdated view of the nuclear family onto church. Since liturgical language has altered in a similar time period as the concern for mission, it might be assumed the omission of family language from the baptism service, already noted, and other changes, such as the replacement of 'family services' with 'All-Age Worship' is part of the same trend (pp. 132-133). It reflects the desire to be aware of newcomers to each service, to make language accessible, and not to give any hint of exclusivity.

The pressure on clergy to 'grow' their churches is immense. Much literature has been written on the subject, a good proportion of which emphasises the importance of a 'healthy' church, with healthy relationships and the responsibility of the leadership to enable this to happen (Warren, 2010, 2012). Though the value of 'healthy' relationships is clearly identified, the language of family is not used in this literature, in contrast to the view of congregations, who clearly see the family network as a mark of the attractiveness of their church. The trust and intimacy which can be enjoyed with fellow church members is highly valued and no contradiction was expressed between enjoying this support and growing in numbers and diversity. A theology of congregation based on the liturgy of baptism, indeed, may easily make the link between "baptising all people" and "making disciples of them" (Matthew 28: 20).

It appeared that some resistance to family language stemmed from self-protection. Though they rejected the warnings of the past about making friends with those in the congregation, only Bishop D. was completely at ease with the emotional closeness that family relationships implied. Savage notes the strain of the role of parish priest and the necessary defence mechanisms that need to be put in place (2006). The principle of 'differentiation,' drawn from Bowen's work on family systems, requires the ordained leader to be both distant and connected to the congregation so as not to be caught in the emotional triangles that create and signify conflict (2012). Each priest assumed that the role that they took and the leadership style which they adopted would be the result of their own choice, not being the focus of projection and transference, joining an existing network

(Hennessey, 2003). But two of those who were taking up their first post of responsibility, Rev B and Rev E, expressed their surprise at the extent to which the congregation treated them in ways they had not chosen. A systemic understanding of the congregation indicates the necessity of sharing the examination of role with others, while the ecclesial identity which derives from the communal life of the Trinity may only be discovered in community with others. This suggests that some efforts at self-definition may either not succeed or result in an impoverished experience of church.

As newcomers, however, it might be difficult for the priests to navigate between the literal and metaphorical uses of familial language and know just who is related to whom. In fact, few of the lay people were able to ascribe a particular family role to the priest, beyond a rejection of 'Father.' When prompted, elder brother and favourite aunt were suggested, both as a result of the speaker having real examples of such relationships, but it appeared that this model of the church as family did not often extend to ascribing roles to individuals in it (Mr J., St Brigid). This contrasts with the use of the language by family systems therapists who would be primarily concerned to examine the familial relationships between individuals. The language was used to describe a congregation even when there were no ordained leaders present and the arrival of a new priest might, indeed, threaten the emotional health of the community. One might have thought the presence of 'Father' was essential, but this premise is not supported by the evidence.

Many clergy, would agree with Reader's description of the family as a 'zombie category' as a metaphor to describe the church (2008). 'Zombie categories' is a phrase coined by Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim to describe those values held onto by institutions which have become redundant through the changes brought about by globalisation (2002). Reader, who argues that concern for families cannot be divorced from awareness of their financial and social pressures, does not address the issue of whether a local church can be described as a family, but does assume that churches who are working with

families have failed to realise the profound extent to which family structures have changed (2008, p.92). My own research did not support this fear; I found lay leaders well aware of the diffuse nature of family life, with absent, unknown and step parents, and the varied expressions of family life in different ethnic groups. One theological colleague who had worked in Europe with an expatriate congregation agreed that the church had assumed a role as a substitute family there, while another suggested that it was the reality of a close, supportive community that was significant, rather than the name (Appendix Four, p.318). Some recent literature on congregational leadership has preferred the term '*emotional systems*' (Steinke, 2006) to describe a community. This, however, fails to acknowledge peoples' preference for metaphor (Astley, 2004, p.50). As Steinke himself wrote earlier: "As the same emotional processes work in a church as in a family it may be called a family" (1993, p.xiv).

I noted that the Bridgebuilders, who organise training in dealing with conflict in congregations, use Bowen's theory of family systems to analyse and resolve difficult relationships (Bridgebuilders, 2012; The Bowen Center, 2012). There is an expectation that the family, birth or adopted, is a likely source of conflict and the wise minister 'differentiates' from it. One priest, Rev B, had attended a course; others had encountered these ideas in their training. This approach contrasts with the overwhelming expectation amongst lay leaders that being a family was a positive and attractive feature of church life. This indicates the necessity of clarity and mutual understanding in the use of language in the conversations: a task for the facilitator.

The clergy to whom I spoke linked their aversion to familial language about the congregation with rejection of talk of the social Trinity (Appendix Four, p.313). Perceived problems with ideas of the social Trinity were expressed as reducing God to a single entity and, possibly, projecting human desires of harmony and so on, on to the Godhead (Norman, 2000). But the argument of Zizioulas and others is that God has revealed Godself as relational in the language of Father and Son (Zizioulas, 1985, Fiddes, 2000) and this is reflected in many

areas of life. Polkinghorne, for example, writes of an 'entangled' world, in which the last century saw an increasing appreciation of relationality in the physical universe and he relates this to the conversation between East and West about the nature of the Trinity: "characterised by perichoretic exchange of mutually interpenetrative love between the three divine persons" (2010). The authors of the *Mission Shaped Church* Report argue that mission to this 'entangled' world, marked by networks of relationships, demands that each local church expresses a trinitarian ecclesiology. All structures and activities should, therefore, be focussed on the Trinity and be, incarnational, transformational, make disciples and be relational (Cray, 2006). The link between relations within the Godhead with those within the congregation constitutes the relational ontology of baptised Christians (Chapter Two, pp. 33-34). The ordinary theology of the lay leaders who spoke of their church as a shared identity, expressed by the use of the first person plural and the supportive community that they experience, expressed an orthodox and missional doctrine. Though rebuked by the newly appointed priests, familial language was expressing an understanding of the church as a corporate body, attractive to others. The conversation between lay and ordained, ordinary and academic theologians has, therefore, provided a fresh perspective on the social trinitarian theology. Just as congregational life has proved to be a place of theological discovery of the trinitarian God in worship (Hardy and Ford, 1984), prayer and service (Fiddes, 2000) and eucharistic experience (Volf, 1998) so discussion of the family-like relationships in congregation has led to a greater understanding of the Trinity. The worshipping believer moves from an appreciation of fellowship in the eucharistic community to a greater understanding of divine communion, although, in essence, the first is dependent on the second (Knight 2006, 74). Indeed, working with colleagues has enabled me to more fully appreciate the extent to which theology is a communal enterprise: I now note that the Cappadocian Fathers themselves worked together on their understanding of the Trinity and thus embodied relational epistemology.

Familial language can, indeed, be "fraught" and "explosive" (Rev A.). There may have been some hesitation about the use of familial language amongst clergy arising from a fear that this was associated with abuse in the church. As people in positions of power, it is the clergy who have been accused of abusive behaviour, sometimes using titles such as 'uncle' to build on relationships of trust (Cahill, 2014, 80). The language of the family, as Freud, Klein and Jung understood, is deeply embedded in each human, but in a church context it is also linked to concepts of salvation and damnation. The church will both mirror the abuse that is found in biological families and provide an alternative and healing set of relationships (Chelmsford Cathedral, 2015).

The objections to family language, then, lay in the fear that it was expressing an inward looking community and outdated conception of family. Where affirmed by academic theology, it was regarded as non-negotiable, representing the shared inheritance as adopted children of God (Mr O. and Bishop D. at St David). The almost unconscious, pragmatic use of the language by clergy, which has been noted (p.139), demonstrates that it has embedded itself in the life of the church. These are echoes of the time when family language was normative, used in baptismal liturgy, but now unfashionable (p.132). This suggests that the ordinary theology expressed by the lay leadership may have been acquired from previous instruction from those trained in academic theology. As at St Chad, for example, the teaching of one priest who encouraged the congregation to address each other as 'sister' and 'brother,' may be rejected by his successor, but remains central to the self-identity of the congregation.

These accounts of congregational life are the 'judicious narratives' requested by Milbank (Scharen, 2005), representing an ecclesiology that is both practical and prophetic (Healy, 2000). They are theology in progress, a contested analysis of the culture and theology of the church. Zizioulas' charge is that Western theology represents a flight from communion to individualism, away from other people, and even from otherness as such (Knight, 2006). If it is difficult to understand freedom in any way other than as freedom from other people, it is

assumed that living together involves giving up some measure of freedom. What is required for the world's salvation is a distinct community with a distinct culture, and it is this community and culture that has been given to the world in the church (Zizioulas, 1991, p. 28). The value of the conversations between lay and ordained leaders is that they have been ecclesiological conversations in a point of time, discussing what is distinctive about congregational life. They represent a theology of the congregation, rather than of the whole church, as experienced by those who have a leadership role in it. Much further work is required to relate this to the parish, diocese and beyond.

Summary of the conversation between ordinary and academic theology of the priesthood and of the congregation.

These facilitated conversations between ordinary theology and academic theology indicate different understandings of the role of the priest and of the local church, both in the use of the language of family and the focus of attention, that is, the congregation or parish. Examination of the source of these views and the purposes which they serve indicates that the clergy believe that part of their role is to correct the language used by their congregations. The clergy were speaking out of their understanding of the appropriate language to use in order to carry out the task of mission. They did not engage with the theology of the church which was being expressed. The conversation between ordinary and academic theology will be facilitated if the participants are aware of the distinction between a description of what is the case and what ought to be the case. The purpose served by the views held need to be explored as well as the correctness or otherwise of what is expressed. I noted a marked distinction between Bishop D. who arrived, in his words as a "prayerful anthropologist" to find out about his parish and the action of several priests who corrected the views of their lay leaders immediately on hearing them. It is, indeed, possible that Biblical and liturgical sources are more evident in ordinary theologies' understanding of church and priesthood than the views of those trained academically. Those

understood as ordinary theologians might better express a Trinitarian ecclesiology than those who are correcting them on the basis of their academic training. A mutually critical conversation needs to allow for opinions to change.

These conversations have shown that much ordinary theology is the echo or trace of past academic theology, rather than being the 'first ripples after a religious event.' (Astley, 2002, p.87). It has derived from academic theology, rather than being prior to it, or from the instructions given by ecclesiastical authority and the responsibilities assigned to lay people.

The effectiveness of facilitated meetings for improving the quality of the relationship between lay leaders and newly arrived priests.

The appreciative feedback that was received has demonstrated that a facilitated conversation between lay and ordained leaders about the nature of the local church and the role of the priests will assist in the development of good relationships, enabling a better understanding of the expectations which the lay leaders and the clergy have of each other. The role of the facilitator is to participate in the group, as would a family systems therapist, changing the dynamics of the system and modelling a healthy relationship. Thus my presence, as a diocesan officer, ordained priest and academic theologian altered the nature of the conversation as I listened to the voice of the lay leaders and encouraged their expression of theology. The experience of these meetings is that the presence of the facilitator is needed in order to ensure the voice of ordinary theology is heard. I am not, however, recommending that the facilitator needs to be a trained family systems therapist nor, indeed, they should be rigid about the application of Family Systems Theory to congregations. This research has shown that congregations are flexible in their use of familial language and models and such inflexibility would be counter-productive.

In such a facilitated conversation the apparent difference between the lay leaders' desire for a priestly ministry and the priest's expectation that they would be agents of change could be openly explored. An appreciation of past history

could be acquired, so that the newcomer could realise the role that is being allocated to them. This would especially assist those new to positions of pastoral charge, experiencing the "huge step-up" that is required when a person becomes an Incumbent (Church of England, 2011, p.) The agreement that the elevated status of priests in the past was to be firmly rejected suggests an area for building a common understanding of the present and the past.

The considerable agreement between the lay and ordained leadership on the priorities and ministerial practice of the newly appointed priest before licensing is a reminder that practice reveals belief, even in a form of Christianity that holds belief to be superior to ritual (Stringer, 2008, p. 66). Recognition of this common understanding lays a good foundation for other dialogue.

In particular, a discussion about the use of familial language will aid mutual understanding of the identity and purpose of the local church. There can be common agreement about the centrality of the topics of authority of Bible, liturgy, and the demands of mission. The energy generated by the use of familial language demonstrates that it is a topic which engages interest and to which all can contribute.

The pressure on clergy to grow the church has coincided with decreased use of familial language in liturgy and has been given as the reason for clerical rejection of the model of church as family. This understanding of the congregation's identity is, however, one held with great affection by some lay leaders. The marked difference in understandings of the nature of the church could lead to conflict and should be addressed (Becker, 1999).

A conversation could address the understanding of the mission of the church from the perspectives of ordinary and academic theology. There appeared to be a difference in understanding of the purpose of the church: to be a place of belonging or to be a place of mission? This can be a creative difference, but laity may look for and thrive best with a leader who embodies their values (Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, 2011). Those who proudly told me that their church was a

family believed this was an attractive feature. A desire to bring others to share the benefits of membership of this family is a motivation to invite newcomers to join them. The fear of clergy that this could mean that only those who were deemed likely to fit in with existing family norms were invited was not unreasonable, and an open discussion could address these fears.

It should also be noted that, though the use of metaphorical language made it easier for most of the participants to discuss the role of the priest and the nature of the church, there were some who wanted to use literal language. This was most evident at the gathering of St Elizabeth, St Edward and St Evelyn. When they were faced with radical re-organisation they were quite explicit about why they needed a priest, though did not agree amongst themselves about the personal characteristics they were looking for. It remains my conclusion that a conversation facilitated by a third party is needed in order to identify these attitudes and encourage collaborative work on the issues raised. Introducing familial language is an effective way of beginning such a conversation, but may not always be the mode in which it continues. Having analysed both the process and the content of the conversations, these conclusions about their effectiveness are based on the value of the *process* of the conversations of which I was a part. I am not arguing that this *content* will be repeated elsewhere; though suggest that the ordinary theology of local congregations that has been evidenced demonstrates the value of such a conversation and bears further examination in its own right.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the value of a facilitated dialogue between the ordained and lay leadership of local churches about the nature of the church and the understanding of priesthood. It has shown that what appears to be untutored 'ordinary theology' may echo past instruction from those who have

received academic training, and may, indeed, reflect current theological thinking more nearly than that proposed by the ordained leadership. A revised process for the facilitated conversation has been proposed.

Chapter Six

Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this research has been to enquire how the period immediately before the arrival of a new minister and during the period of induction can be best used as a significant moment to foster good relationships between minister and congregation. This is to attend to the gap in knowledge identified in Chapter One: the effective use of the end of ministerial vacancy.

The research has arisen from my perception of distance and, occasionally, alienation between ordained and lay members of the church (Jordan, 2008) and an interest and involvement in the life of churches during ministerial vacancy (Jordan, 2012). It has been undertaken towards a doctorate in practical theology, and the fieldwork carried out while I have been responsible for lay development and training in Chelmsford Diocese.

This research has taken place in the context of a radical 're-imagination' of ministry in the Church of England (Diocese of Chelmsford, 2011). As a large number of stipendiary priests approach retirement, a pattern of ministry which was based on a single priest in each parish will need to be replaced by collaboration between lay and ordained ministers, working at local and diocesan levels. My research has not been concerned with the changing patterns of ministry which will result, but with the development of effective working relationships between lay and ordained leaders. The context is my work on lay perceptions of clergy (Jordan, 2008), the strategy of the Diocese of Chelmsford (2011), and my work on transition and interim ministry (Jordan, 2012). The research has been carried out as an examination of my practice as a diocesan officer and Chelmsford Diocese has sponsored and supported this research.

"The difference between a professional doctorate and a PhD lies not only in its structure, but in the nature of the knowledge generated and its foundations in, and contribution to, practice" (Powell and Long, 2005 cited in Bennett and Graham, 2008, p. 33). This concluding chapter contains the conclusions and implications of the research and the action I recommend is taken at the end of ministerial vacancies, in order to foster good relationships between ordained and lay leaders.

Answering the Research Question - Conclusions.

There are both conceptual and practical conclusions that arise from this research. Analysis of the facilitated conversations between lay and ordained leaders has resulted in both fresh insights into the identity of a local congregation and a manner of studying it. The practical conclusion which results addresses directly the research question.

The conceptual conclusions are, firstly, that a relational ontology consequent upon a theology of the social Trinity demands attention to the relation of the researching professional to the sources of his or her knowledge. The relationship between sociology and theology has been illuminated by the awareness of the necessary perspectives they have each provided in this research. The relational epistemology that has been employed has demonstrated that knowledge and understanding is gained through relationship.

The second conceptual conclusion is that the local congregation is a family-like system of emotional and theological relationships. I have, therefore, concluded that the most effective conversation to be conducted in the period following a new ministerial appointment is one that explores the use of familial language to describe congregational life.

Conceptual Conclusions

As I analysed the scripts of the facilitated conversations I re-examined the theoretical framework and tested my initial assumption that it would be possible to examine congregational life through the three perspectives

of theology, social science and self. I have argued that the theoretical framework required for researchers with a pastoral responsibility for those participating in the research must have a distinctive quality. Both the ethical and epistemological implications of being an insider and participant in the subject of the research necessitate a framework that includes the researcher's own perspective as a critical element. It is not enough to consider the ethical implications before beginning research and to be reflexive and reflective during and after the fieldwork is carried out: the researcher is present at all times and her perspective must be related to the others that are employed.

A theology of the Trinity which focuses on the relationships within the Godhead in preference to examination of the individual characteristics of each Person results in an understanding of human ontology. (Zizioulas, 1985, Greenwood, 1996, Fiddes, 2000). Sociologists' theories of the social self are consonant with the relational ontology derived from this trinitarian theology, which requires a relational epistemology. This holds that truth is perceived in community. Knowledge of God is gained through participation in the life of God through prayer, service and membership of a Christian fellowship, and so knowing God as loving, forgiving and life enhancing (Fiddes, 2000).

My understanding of this concept has been enriched through carrying out this research as I have observed lay leaders instinctively speaking of themselves as part of a community, making corporate decisions. I, though, noted clerical resistance to theologies of the social Trinity. This echoes a current aversion to theologies of the social Trinity, concerned to assert either that the essence of God cannot be known (Lossky, 1944) or that the distinctive character of each Person of the Trinity may be lost in the attention paid to their essential unity (Norman, 2000). In this research I have been concerned with the effect of the doctrine of God which is held by those articulating both academic and ordinary ecclesiology, since the life of the church flows from the nature of God (Williams, 2006). Zizioulas' concept of the relational ontology of humans, derived from his social trinitarianism, has criticised contemporary individualism. His argument that

relationship is prior to personhood in an ontological sense goes much further than any assertion that an individual's character or self awareness is affected by the company they keep. He is saying that an individual without relationships is less than a full person, being unable to fulfil their destiny to become part of the triune life of God. (Zizioulas, 1985, p.215). Rather, at baptism all are ordained and ascribed different roles in the church (Volf, 1998. 114,). This challenges any understanding of priestly ontology which is based on individual identity. The value of theologies of the social Trinity is twofold. The life of congregations is described as essentially relational because created by a relational Trinity who invites participation in trinitarian life and, secondly, a theological examination of congregations may take place in partnership with non-theological disciplines if the latter start from an understanding of humans as beings in relationship.

The decision to employ the distinction identified by Astley (2002), between 'ordinary' and 'academic' theology to analyse the conversation between ordained and lay leaders arose from listening to the narratives and dialogue that took place during the facilitated meetings. Broadening the definition of theology beyond the usual normative and formal voices (Cameron et al, 2010) yields rich results. This demonstrates that, while the relationship of social sciences and of theology in practical theology is a matter of contention, adoption of a trinitarian understanding of God which emphasises participation in the Godhead, with a theological method that values the voice of 'ordinary theology' may interact with a systemic understanding of community, and appreciation of the work done by social scientists on the place of the researcher in the research (Chapter Two, p.42). This research, therefore, makes a significant contribution to the debate about the study of congregations, describing a process by which theological and sociological perspectives may clarify and critique each other. Reflection on my own participation in the life of the Trinity and in congregational life has shown that I am influenced by the insights of both theologians and sociologists. Reflection on my professional experience working with congregations has shown that I have used both Biblical and formal theological resources, and theories of

adult learning and group dynamics drawn from secular sources. As I have analysed the scripts resulting from the meetings I have employed both theological and sociological categories, primarily in the use of familial language. I have used the perspectives of Family Systems Theory as applied to congregations, and of the congregation as the new family of God to gain a deeper understanding of the facilitated conversations that I have held. It is my experience, as a researcher and as practitioner, that tells me is that it is not possible to separate the contribution of theology and the social sciences.

The triangular theoretical framework described in Chapter Two (pp. 23-42) has been tested in practical research. Accepting the equal role of the self in the research project facilitates dialogue between the social sciences and theology by attending to my own participation in the life of the Trinity, and so of the church, and of participation in the family-like system of the local congregation. Taking an objective stance might necessitate an evaluation of the relative epistemological value of sociology and theology, but observation of the relation of each to myself has illuminated the connections they have with each other. Such a relational epistemology undergirds a framework that enables research to be undertaken by an insider (Chapter Two, p. 40).

The value of a collaborative approach to truth-seeking has been demonstrated. Whatever paradigm is adopted, and whether truth is seen as revealed or constructed, it will be interpreted through human senses and in less than perfect shape. Study of the local congregation, envisaged as both a human and a theological community, requires a robust theoretical framework, each partner acting as a critical corrective to the other.

The second conceptual conclusion of this research is that the local congregation is a family-like system of emotional and theological relationships. The decision to examine the nature of the congregation arose from awareness of the changed expectations of both lay and ordained members of the church arising from a trinitarian ecclesiology and the imperative of mission (Chapter Two, pp.12-

14). The corporate nature of the church is expressed in such descriptions as the Body of Christ (e.g. I Cor. 12: 12-14), the vine and branches (John 15:15) and the household of God (e.g. Eph. 2: 19, Newbigin, 2009). This biblical and theological material informed the picture of the congregation as a place of relationships, an emotional system (Bertalanffy, 1968) rather than a gathering of individuals. But the descriptions given above were not the ones used by the lay leaders of congregations to whom I spoke: the systemic and biblical image that was used was the church as a family. Both biblical and liturgical use of family and my own experience of the intense emotional lives of congregations confirmed that the appropriate systemic theory with which to engage was Family Systems Theory (Friedman, 1985, The Bowen Centre, 2012). It has, however, been shown that the lay leaders used familial language in a greater multiplicity of ways (Chapter Five, pp.129-130) than Family Systems Theory alone would indicate. The family-like nature of the local congregation is complex, taking different forms in each place. The process of conversations which have been carried out has shed light on the nature of relationships within congregations and provided a language that lay and ordained leaders can share: it has also indicated the necessity of listening to the particular use of language without pre-judging its meaning.

Practical conclusion

The practical conclusion which follows from these conceptual conclusions is that the most effective conversation to be conducted in the period following a new ministerial appointment is about the nature of the congregation, using familial language.

Having investigated how the period immediately after the appointment of a new minister and during the period of induction can be best used to improve the quality of the relationship between minister and congregation I conclude that a facilitated conversation between the lay leadership and the newly appointed minister about models of leadership will assist this process. Familial language is far from widely accepted about the church and I have identified several reasons for its rejection, especially by clergy. But it never failed to stimulate debate as, in

each church there was at least one person who wanted to use it as a model, a metaphor or a theological reality. Familial language, therefore, was an effective model for exploring clerical and lay perceptions of the nature of the congregation and leadership of it.

It has been shown (Chapter Five, pp. 129- 130) that familial language is used in both literal and metaphorical ways, describing both blood relationships, intense emotional ties and a theological reality. There is certainly the possibility of confusion, but this argues for a conversation that clarifies individual and shared understandings, rather than a rejection of the language. The possibility of confusion also strengthens the case for a facilitated conversation that enables all voices to be heard. Abandoning, rather than interrogating, the language will not assist the development of good relationships at this crucial time.

The process used for the facilitated conversation about the use of familial language was over-burdensome for the lay leaders and a revised process is proposed (Chapter Five, pp. 140-145). This will aid mutual understanding of the identity and purpose of the local congregation and so contribute to knowledge about the effective use of the end of vacancy in promoting good relationships between lay and ordained leaders of the local church.

Contribution to knowledge:

This research contributes to knowledge both in the content of the research and the manner in which it has been carried out. I have, first, integrated the perspectives of theology and the social sciences through attention to my own participation in congregational life and, secondly, demonstrated that the use of familial language in the life of congregations is complex, yet a fruitful subject for consideration between lay and ordained leaders. In so doing I have contributed to the growing body of literature about "ordinary" and "academic" theology. The third contribution is the manner in which I have carried out and analysed a process of facilitated conversations.

The perspectives of theology and the social sciences have been integrated through attention to my own participation in congregational life. The conversation between self and theology has been framed by my desire to establish theology as normal and primary (Swinton, 2011) in all aspects of this research, not least in the understanding of my own identity. I have been able to identify myself as a participant in the life of the churches which I am studying, primarily because a shared faith implies a shared identity as children of God. This identity, given by God, unites me with the participants in the research and gives us a common future. This shared ontology, affecting the nature of self at the deepest level, has profound consequences for the approach I have taken as a researcher. It means that objectivity is neither possible, nor sought.

Yet I am also aware of the debt I owe to the work of social scientists who, following G. H. Mead have arrived at an understanding of self as a construction (Giddens 1991, Ford, 1999, Hennessey, 2003). Though there is an apparent contradiction here with the God-given nature of the theological self, the resulting understanding of self can engage with the relational ontology of social Trinitarians (Chapter Two, pp.37-39). When studying the nature of congregations I concluded they were, as Schillebeeckx describes the whole church, (1990) "single entities in two languages," and must be described in both theological and sociological terms. I have concluded that I am also a single entity in two languages, understood both in my God-given nature and in the self constructed through relationship with others, past and present.

It is this attention to myself as social entity and as Christian believer that has shed light on the methodology with which I have examined the life of congregations and so the relationship between ordained and lay leaders. Having recognised that both my own identity and that of congregations should be viewed through both theological and sociological lenses it became apparent that the relational ontology which they share means that there is common ground between them. Though theology is to be given priority, if it is the only voice that is heard there is a risk of complacency, error and a lack of curiosity. Research is

better served by a conversation than a monologue. The perspective that operates as if there were no God and explains life solely in human terms, may serve the theological perspective as a challenge, stimulus and corrective.

Secondly, I have demonstrated that the use of familial language in the life of congregations is complex, yet a fruitful subject for a dialogue between lay and ordained leaders. Much writing on the local church as a family is by and for the ordained leaders of congregations. This model has been widely used, for example, within the Interim Ministry Network (2010), as a guide for those who will have a short term appointment in a church and by Bridgebuilders as a tool for church leaders (2012). My research has shown that there is a strong sense of family within the membership of local churches. This is based as much on Biblical and liturgical theology as on comparison with natural, birth families. My research, therefore, critiques the pragmatic use of secular theory by such agencies as Bridgebuilders and the Interim Ministry Network, while providing ample alternative material for the use of family language with which to hold a conversation about the nature of the church.

I have shown that, within congregations, familial language is used in multiple senses: a theological reality, a metaphor to describe a community bound together by relationships that transcend time and space, and a particular systems language (Chapter Five p. 129). Meanings are transferred from personal experience of birth families, both good and bad. These experiences are strengthened by the support that has been received and by the conflicts that persist. The evidence of the recorded conversations is that members of congregations are as aware of the identity of the whole congregation as a family as much as individual relationships within it, such as parent child or sibling. Several people said that while they strongly identified with familial language they did not identify particular individual roles. This contrasts with the approach of Family Systems Theory, which is based on understanding the relationships that individuals have with each other. The use of familial language by lay members to describe a congregation is usually intended to be a positive complement and lay

people believe that it will be an attractive feature to those who do not belong to church. In a society where natural families are fragmented and communal life is rare, the church family is an alternative place of identity and belonging. It should be noted that their language may be different from that used by clergy or others who have studied family systems theory, who may be more inclined to analyse the one-to-one relationships within the congregation rather than the whole community. Some would argue that familial language is to be avoided because of this complexity, but my recommendations are based on the greater benefit of clarifying usage in such an important area of church life.

The understanding that the beliefs and practices of those without formal theological training is itself an authentic theology has been well argued by Astley (2002). Giving lay people the opportunity to rehearse their understanding and then facilitating a conversation between them and the newly appointed priest has enabled a conversation to take place between ordinary and academic theology. As a piece of practical theology, therefore, this thesis contributes a research-based account of the relation between ordinary and academic ecclesiology and theologies of priesthood. It has been an unbalanced conversation, as the power has lain in the hands of the clergy, schooled to believe that they have a responsibility to correct untutored views. But a conversation in real time, not one mediated through articles and texts, has taken place. Such conversation is rare, and it is usually the voice of ordinary theology that is silenced. A facilitated conversation that intentionally gives space to the lay voice will assist in the mutual appreciation and understanding of all parties.

The manner in which this research has been conducted is a further contribution to knowledge. I have carried out and analysed a process of facilitated conversations rather than arranging interviews. This has enabled a process to be trialled for future use and the participants' own theologies to be heard. This process has allowed lay people to articulate their understanding of the role of the priest and the nature of the local church and has demonstrated the value of taking such expressions of faith and practice seriously. The strength of this

approach is that recommendations for practice that result from this trial are grounded in the realities of congregational life.

I have recorded the reactions that I received after the process, which were largely positive (Chapter Five, p. 140). This series of meetings has provided an arena for an exchange of views that has strengthened understanding and built trust for future conversations.

This method of facilitated conversations is truer to my professional practice when engaged in parish development work and so an appropriate research method in pursuit of a professional doctorate.

Contribution to Practice

The examination of an effective process to foster good relationships between lay and ordained leaders has indicated that a model of congregational life and hence of leadership that is relational is necessary. The relational ontology that is derived from the trinitarian life of God means that the identity of any participant in the life of the church is constituted by their relationship with the whole congregation (Zizioulas, 1985, pp. 221-222). This is as true of clergy as of members of the congregation: each is part of a network of relationships that constitutes and constrains them. In secular terms, the congregation is a system, of which the priest is a part. There are significant implications for my own and diocesan practice.

The implications for diocesan practice.

I have benefitted from the co-operation of the senior staff in Chelmsford Diocese as this research is seen as a contribution to the debate about changing patterns of ministry, expressed in the document *Transforming Presence* (Chelmsford 2011). The new priest will not inhabit the same role as his or her predecessor and the responsibilities, expectations and responsibilities of both lay and ordained leaders will have changed. The second factor in church life which is now prominent is the imperative to 'grow' the congregation, to increase the numbers of those who worship regularly. The implications for the diocese,

resulting from this research, concerns appropriate action in the light of this situation.

The recommendations that I make are, therefore, framed as implications for revised practice in Chelmsford diocese, whose current programmes and resources I know well. The national and international context in which this research has taken place, however, indicates the relevance of a theologically informed process for the articulation of the changing responsibilities of lay and ordained leaders (Church of England, 2015a; Living Stones, 2015). It also indicates the value of listening to the contribution of those whose voice is seldom heard in the discussions of new and emerging forms of ministry.

I found the lay leaders well aware of these changes, though sometimes resistant to them. The clergy, too, were keenly aware of their responsibility to effect growth in their churches. The parish profiles and job descriptions had been drawn up in the light of the changing responsibilities that clergy would have and the need for growth. This research indicates that the appointment process has not adequately altered to meet this new situation. In order to achieve this aim there are implications for practice at the beginning of a new ministry. (Consideration of the points raised may indicate appropriate action as a church puts together its profile and interviews are held. I have not addressed these issues, having concentrated on the time after an appointment has been made).

The model of clergy-lay relations that was held by those arranging the appointment process varied between individuals, and Episcopal Areas. A transition is taking place between the former system, in which a bishop appointed the priest to a parish and one of increased consultation and negotiation. The assistance given to the local church in drawing up the profile and role description can, though, still leave the diocesan authorities with considerable control. A change of Area Bishop in one Episcopal Area, for example, effected a change in approach. St Agnes and St Anna were caught in this change and, though they experienced a revised receptivity to their ideas and perception of needs, their

own draft profiles and role descriptions were still heavily revised, in ways that were not quite comprehensible to them. No one interviewed was able to express confidence that their voice had been accepted as authoritative about the needs of the local church. Even their clear ideas about their understanding of priestly ministry could be dismissed. The strength of language used at the churches of St Agnes, St Anna and St Chad about the process indicated their perceived need to *fight* the diocese for what they wanted. Such a combative attitude creates potential for future disagreements and places the priest in an awkward situation as the intermediary between the diocese and the parish. Although my research concerned the end of the vacancy I noted that the action of the diocese at the beginning had left a legacy which could impede good relationships between lay and ordained leaders.

The first implication for the diocese is that more attention is paid to the ordinary theology of the lay leaders. Their understanding of priesthood may not be expressed in 'priest-speak' (Mrs S. at St Brigid) but has been shown to be grounded in an appreciation of the distinct role that a priest can fulfil. The conversation recommended between lay and ordained leaders will be assisted if both those who guide the local church at the outset of the ministerial vacancy and the priest who is appointed are able to listen with discernment, not assuming that they have the only orthodox understanding of priesthood.

The appointment process had also left a legacy of distrust of the diocese because of a lack of information about the changing pastoral situation. Though all the participants had been asked to contribute to discussions at parish, deanery and diocesan level about 're-imagining ministry' (Chelmsford 2011), they did not believe they were equal partners in the project. This belief was justified when they received information at short notice and without an opportunity for consultation. Rev A, for example, who has a deanery role, found that the lay leaders had little understanding of it. The churches of St Elizabeth and St Evelyn found that they were given information about the priest's additional responsibilities at the last minute.

These conversations indicate that the diocese risks failing to live up to its own aspiration to re-imagine ministry (Chelmsford, 2011). The treatment of the lay leaders, representatives of their congregations, suggests that they are being consulted as the recipients not as partners in the work of ministry. The transition that is taking place is from a clerically dominated church to one of shared ministry, but it is apparent that old habits die hard. In St Chad, for example, the Reader was told by the Archdeacon not to attend the meeting with a candidate, on the basis that he would be her supervisor. Such a hierarchical pattern of accountability fails to acknowledge the shared responsibility of the lay and ordained leaders for the life of the church.

The second implication of this research for the diocese, then, is that relationships between lay and ordained leaders of congregations may be affected by the legacy of diocesan decisions. There will be continuing resentment and suspicion if information is withheld or the local church not treated as an equal partner in the appointment. Complete openness will raise problems when there are genuine difficulties in making an announcement but wherever possible the lay leaders should know that their requests have been heard and that they will be kept well informed.

The third implication of the research concerns ongoing ministerial development. The priests that I spoke to wanted to act as enablers of the ministry of the congregation. Some spoke of shared leadership. Each was aware of the changing nature of ordained leadership of a congregation. Yet it was also apparent that several acted in ways that contradicted their declared aims and would need further assistance to achieve the relationship with their congregation and lay leaders that they had said they wanted. The usual response to a training need in clergy is to organise some event which gathers clergy together. A systemic approach or relational ontology would bring all interested parties, lay and ordained, together. It might be fruitful, indeed, to discuss the use made by lay and ordained leaders of Family Systems Theory and, in particular, the principle of differentiation (The Bowen Center, 2012). This research indicates that a facilitated

conversation in which lay and ordained leaders can listen and learn from each other is an effective way to build a good relationship and as a consequence I recommend that every effort is made to open all meetings and training events to both lay and ordained members of the church.

Implications for my practice

This research has heightened my own awareness of how my interventions in congregational life may be seen. I have become more aware of the extent to which my own understanding of priesthood and the work I carry out has been shaped by my relationship with others. I have, in particular, noted that the perspectives of both theology and sociology have influenced my perception of others and their church communities, and have noted the creeping dominance of secular theories of adult learning and group behaviour. I will, in future, be more aware of the need to make theology primary through attention to the relational ontology of the congregation (Swinton, 2011).

As a researching professional I began this research motivated by an interest in clergy-lay relationships, having noted the apparently contradictory messages that there is both a great desire for a priest and apparent anti-clericalism, distance and suspicion (Chapter One, pp.15-17). I now have a clearer understanding of the self-identity of an indicative sample of ordained and lay leaders, and the pressures and influences on them, a synthesis of respect and suspicion. I am more aware of the desire of Wardens to maintain the peace during a vacancy and the pressures felt by parish representatives to find a candidate acceptable to the whole congregation. I am alert to instances of clergy rebuking/instructing the laity and aware of how little is discussed about theological issues at the time of appointment. I also have a better awareness of how clergy view congregations and the pressures upon them of the missionary task.

Thus, if there are two identities in the church, ordained and lay, I have had to ask where my sympathies and sense of identity lies. I have found that learning to handle concepts and develop theory has assisted in addressing this question. The death of my mother during the period of research has prompted

consideration of the lasting legacy of the relationships of my nuclear family on my current attitudes. I can now identify individuals to whom I react in a similar way to the way I have related to my parents and siblings and so can acknowledge the power of familial language and relationships in every aspect of life.

Dissemination of work.

I took several opportunities during the course of carrying out this research to engage with other researchers and practitioners. This was with the intention of incorporating the reactions that I received into the findings, so that the final conclusions reflected the relational epistemology which has undergirded the theoretical framework. Presentation of these ideas to other members of the Professional Doctorate cohort at Anglia Ruskin University, both formally as I sought Confirmation of Candidature and in informal discussion, has been an integral part of the doctoral journey (Bennett and Graham, 2008).

As is appropriate in research for a professional doctorate, the implications of this research for my own practice and that of my colleagues has resulted in presentations to the National Adult Education Network, to colleagues in the diocesan ministry and training department and to the final year curates (Jordan, 2014, p.9). The underlying theoretical framework was the subject of a presentation to the Faith in Research Day and to the Ecclesiology and Ethnography Symposium (2014). The paper read to the Chelmsford Theological Society brought these two perspectives together, as I examined the congregation as the meeting place of theory and practice (Chelmsford Cathedral 2015).

These presentations to colleagues, that have extended both beyond the diocese and to non-Anglican church members and theologians, are an indication of the relevance of this research to the church in the midst of transition.

Further activity is indicated in several areas

This research has addressed the relationships between lay leaders and the newly appointed ordained leaders of Anglican congregations. It has been set in the context of the changing patterns of ministry in the Church of England and my own professional experience. I am aware of similar work being done in other Anglican provinces (Living Stones, 2015), but have not examined the situation in churches of other Christian denominations. My contention is that good relationships between lay and ordained leaders are necessary for the sake of effective mission, but the manner in which my conclusions about how to foster these relations are applicable in denominations in which there are different leadership structures must be interpreted through further research.

The process which I carried out was found to be flawed as it demanded too much of the lay participants at a time of stressful over-activity. The revised process which I have suggested (Chapter Five, p.145) may now be trialled, using the theoretical framework, methodology and research methods which have been described.

This research has focussed on one process, that of facilitated conversations, and has not considered any alternative activity. It has found this process to be effective and it may be recommended, with the proposed revisions, with confidence. In order to know whether this is the best and most effective activity it would, however, be necessary to trial alternative activities. This is an area for further work.

I have already indicated that a conceptual flaw in the research is that it was not carried out as a fully collaborative effort. Having decided to proceed on a foundation of relational epistemology, this kind of research should ideally be a collaborative project (Healy, 2000 p.177). Relational epistemology, asserts that truth is known in relationship with God and others: such sharing cannot be an optional extra, but is essential. I have sought reflection from colleagues, but they were not equal partners in the research. Future research would also benefit from consideration of the appropriate methods to use to collaborate more openly with

the participants in the research (Moschella, 2008). I remain unsure, and a little uneasy, about the rightness of personal gain from an activity which, though informed consent was given, the participants had not initiated. I am aware, however, that a doctorate, even a professional doctorate, is expected to be the original work of one person (Trafford and Leshem, 2008). The interaction of ethical and epistemological concerns is an area for further consideration.

The discovery that the meetings I facilitated between lay and ordained leaders of congregations were the occasion of a conversation between ordinary and academic theology has been an unexpected delight. The conversations have revealed a depth and richness of understanding amongst the ordinary theologians and should be a source of confidence and affirmation. Further conversations with those who have not had academic training in theology about their understanding of the church and of ministry will, I consider, assist the Church of England in its task of 're-imagining ministry (2010) The clerical suspicion of the untutored views of the laity should be laid aside and, rather than correcting what appears to be error, priests learn to listen to the wisdom of lay leaders.

Conclusion of Thesis

My own learning has developed in the course of this research as the conclusions, both practical and conceptual, will make an original contribution to knowledge about relations between lay and ordained leaders of congregations. Trinitarian theology, which has developed theories of relational ontology and relational epistemology, has been shown to have direct applicability to the communal identity of local congregations, expressed in the language of family. A knowledge of family systems theory has been shown to assist understanding of the relationships between individuals, so long as care is taken to listen to the ordinary theology expressed, which focuses on the identity of the whole congregation. A process of facilitated conversations which enables expression of

this language to describe the identity of the local congregation and the role of the priest will assist in the development of effective working relationships between lay and ordained leaders of the church. Such mutual learning will aid the whole church as it attempts to carry out God's mission.

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Appendix One

Elizabeth Jordan

DPT Literature Review

‘One of us or one of them?’ Exploring the nature of relationships between laity and clergy in Church of England parishes, and how they may be studied

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Introduction

In researching relationships between lay and ordained members of the Church of England many issues arise. How to find a route through the maze of voices and traditions surrounding the nature of the Church, understandings of priesthood and of those not ordained?

In my professional work as a trainer of authorized lay ministers and Ordained Local Ministers in the Church of England I have worked with many of these traditions, sometimes as unspoken assumptions that catch the unwary traveller. Previous research has suggested a rift in understanding between lay and ordained members of the church, and evidence of an anti-clerical sentiment.⁵ I was investigating the effect of ordination within the Diocesan training scheme on the self-image of Ordained Local Ministers. Many remarked on a desire expressed by their congregation that they did not cease to be 'one of us.' Difference between local and stipendiary ministry was expressed in terms both of respect and of distrust.

This research also highlighted the extent to which those sponsored by their local churches for authorised ministry, lay or ordained, expected that they will be a 'go between' mediating between the full time, paid, clergy and the congregation. I decided to find a way to research the current state of relationships between laity and clergy in the Church of England. I wish, in particular to identify:

The nature of the understanding of priesthood which is held by church members,

Whether the existing distinction between laity and clergy is affected by the introduction of local, non stipendiary, ministers.

⁵ Carried out for an MA in Religion and Culture, Birmingham University, 2007, published as Elizabeth Jordan, "The Place of Ordained Local Ministry in the Church of England," *Practical Theology* 1.2 (2008): 219-232.

At the outset of my search of the literature, suspecting that this was not an area in which there was dedicated study, I decided on an examination of a wide range of scholarship in order to gain as broad a picture as possible of those who have contributed to this debate. The image that I have used is that of a map maker, who must begin with a survey of the territory: a reconnaissance that is not hasty in its judgements.

The pattern of this review will, therefore, be:

Part One Aerial reconnaissance: The relevance of Practical Theology (PT) to investigation of this subject and the identification of key features for closer study. I have chosen to engage with PT as a field of enquiry which deals seriously with both theory and practice within a framework than can encompass academic research and analysis of experience.

Part Two Map Making: Study of historical and theological approaches to ecclesiology, priesthood and lay discipleship. Suspecting that these three topics form a necessary foundation of knowledge for any dialogue with Anglican theologians, I will also be examining them to illuminate the experience of lay and ordained in today's church.

Part Three A Practical Theological Companion: Dialogue with R.A. Lambourne. I have identified Lambourne as a pastoral theologian who was passionately concerned with mission of the church, but who has not been part of previous discussion about ecclesiology, priesthood and lay discipleship.

Part Four Signposts: An overview of the map of theological work done on the nature of the church, priesthood and lay theology, and its interaction with the study of congregations and lay-clergy relationships. I am here able to check my initial hypotheses, (found on page 15), about clergy-lay relations against current research and to conclude with identification of unmapped territory.

Part Five Conclusions: The review will conclude with a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, problems and outcomes of the review and indicate areas for future study.

Part 1 Aerial reconnaissance

Can PT assist in the formation of a map of research of lay-clergy relationships? My own involvement in PT in a formal way has been recent, but the deficiencies of solely theoretical study of events and beliefs have long been apparent. I have questioned the concentration of theologians on Biblical and Patristic authorities when addressing the contemporary church and its ministry and attempted to record the views of church members on theological issues. Both ventures have met with little success, as I lacked an appropriate methodology. I will here examine the nature of PT in order to investigate whether it can remedy that lack. The work of some practical theologians will then be examined in order to identify routes for further study.

1.1 What is Practical Theology?

Although the evolution of the term 'Practical Theology' may be charted,⁶ the discipline's present boundaries appear unending.⁷ Is PT an autonomous field of enquiry, a sub discipline of theology, or an integrative discipline? Browning argued⁸ that he was not creating a new genre, but used his term 'fundamental practical theology' to describe the scope of all theology, which should be divided

⁶ In, for example, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 1.

⁷ John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt list empirical, political, ethical, psychological, sociological, pastoral, gender oriented and narrative-based research. See John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 3.

⁸ Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

into four modes: descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic practical theology. It is the last which contains both the theological reflection on the former and the impetus for action.

Others have used the term more narrowly, as a pressure group within the theological faculty, encouraging a new approach and co-operation between theologians.⁹ Believing that academic theology relates only to the reflective and the conceptual, making little or no connection with experience or action, Veling asserts that PT is an attempt to heal the fragmentation of theology, and to re-integrate theory and practice, the poetical and the practical.¹⁰

Being a field of study which is concerned not to leave out any source of knowledge and wisdom, PT will function well as an overview of the territory to be explored. Such a discipline, though, could easily lack direction. Pattison and Lynch¹¹ outline distinctive features of PT which sharpen the focus.

a) Reflection upon lived contemporary experience. This is both democratic and disciplined as PT provides criteria for assessment of experience in dialogue with Christian tradition.

b) The adoption of an interdisciplinary approach. The church must both speak and listen to contemporary culture and the insights of social sciences into

⁹ See Roger L. Walton, "Teaching Theological Thinking in Practical Theology," *Contact* 154 (2007): 42-49 for a successful attempt at cross departmental approach.

¹⁰ Terry Veling, *Practical Theology: On Earth as it is in Heaven* (Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), 141, 198.

¹¹ Stephen Pattison and Gordon Lynch, "Pastoral and Practical Theology," in David Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 410-12.

individuals and society will both enable the Church to reflect on its own practice and give authenticity to its witness.

c) A critical dialogue between theological norms and contemporary experience. It is partly awareness of the riches of revelation outside of a church tradition and partly frustration with the narrowness of vision found in the church, that I wish to enter a critical conversation between the diverse branches of theology and other disciplines.

d) A preference for liberal or radical models of theology. I wish to research ways in which priesthood is understood and interpreted and am, therefore, searching for an understanding of events, experiences and perceptions, rather than scientific proof. Questions of authority and revelation will, therefore, be integral to my research, as I examine diverse approaches to Biblical authority and the traditions of the church.

e) The need for theoretical and practical transformation. "The aim of the pastoral cycle is not to make theological technicians, but to enable those involved in ministry to come to an informed pastoral wisdom."¹²

Adopting this framework would result in a study that is rooted in the experience of lay and clerical members of the church, engages in a dialogue with both the traditions of Christian theology and with the social sciences and which leads to proposals for change. This suggests the panoramic view I am seeking; each element must now be examined in more detail.

1.2 The elements of PT

¹² Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2006), 162.

PT would not operate without a belief that 'truth' is to be found in everyday experience, and in the extra-ordinary, as well as in libraries. Cartledge draws attention to the Hebrew identification of knowledge with relationship, expressed in the word *yada*¹³, while Veling affirms that the voice heard in the Bible is the 'living word of God' (Heb. 4 12): not a closed document.¹⁴ Within the framework of PT the experience of those whose voice is rarely heard in debates about the church's ministry, the lay members of congregations, may be accorded due importance.

PT recognises how 'theory indwells practice.'¹⁵ Examination of the identity and role of the church and its ministers may, legitimately, include study of what happens in congregational life. Ballard and Pritchard outline a variety of models of the relationship between theory and practice.¹⁶ The 'revised correlational approach' will illuminate clergy-lay relationships through a dialogue between Christian tradition and the insights of other disciplines. The habits of the church may thus be held in judgement more clearly than if this had simply become an internal inquiry. But the dialogue will also ensure that the traditions, the memory, of the church are a partner in the conversation, so that the study is not simply a sociological one. Browning describes the process of 'historical theology' as asking the question, 'what do the normative texts that are already part of our effective history *really* imply for our praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible?'¹⁷ It is therefore important that practitioners have an understanding of

¹³ Mark Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 45.

¹⁴ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 39.

¹⁵ Veling, *Practical theology*, 4.

¹⁶ Ballard and Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, 57, 59-77.

¹⁷ Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 49.

what is meant by the Christian tradition: Ballard¹⁸ has identified inadequate knowledge of doctrine, and Walton of the Bible,¹⁹ as serious obstacles to good reflection.

How to choose which disciplines to include? Browning's validity claims²⁰ act as criteria for evaluation of dialogue partners as well as guides to action, while Graham²¹ argues that partnership that leads to consideration of alterity (the 'other'), diversity and inclusiveness should be privileged. Attention to the experience of ordinands during previous research and my current professional work has reinforced the impression that I gained from initial reading and word searches that I should engage with ecclesiology, the theology of priesthood and the understanding of lay discipleship. The first two disciplines are often practised without regard for contemporary experience, while the third has been discussed in isolation from the first two. Critical dialogue between each with lived experience and of the interaction between them will be facilitated by PT.

1.3 Ways of structuring the dialogue

Praxis models, such as Liberation Theology, emphasize the importance of analysis; 'thick descriptions' and of the use of the pastoral cycle, with the aim of

¹⁸ Paul Ballard, "Theological Reflection and Providence," *Practical Theology* 1.3 (2008): 285-289.

¹⁹ Roger Walton, "Using the Bible and Christian Tradition in Theological Reflection," *British Journal of Theological Education* 13.2 (2003): 133-151.

²⁰ Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 70. The visional level examines metaphysical validity claims; the obligational level, normative ethical claims; the need or anthropological dimension, claims about human nature; an environmental -social dimension, the systemic and ecological constraints and the rule-role dimension, the patterns enacted in practice in the world.

²¹ Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice; Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Mowbray, 1996), 10.

transforming human society.²² Green describes the evolution of the pastoral cycle amongst the European worker priests, the Latin American liberation theologians and the American movement for Social Analysis.²³ His own 'Doing Theology' spiral was developed in dialogue with the ideas of Kolb²⁴ and, later, Freire and Segundo.²⁵ PT does not always explicitly involve the pastoral cycle, but echoes of it do appear in each practitioner's work. Pattison's preferred model, a 'critical dialogue between theological norms and contemporary experience' advocates a three-way conversation between the ideas, beliefs, feelings perceptions, and assumptions of the reflector, those beliefs and perceptions provided by Christian tradition, and the contemporary situation which is being examined.²⁶ The latter will involve both the lived experience and works of non theological disciplines.

Valuing the fourth stage of the pastoral cycle, I intend to examine, not only the literature on what causes a breakdown in relationships, but also propose action to improve relations. Criteria for the 'success' of a piece of reflection include the test of Christian appropriateness, (is this faithful to Christian message), intelligibility (logical and consistent), moral integrity (ethical and practical implications) and validity – does it speak to the experience with credibility, truth and reality?²⁷

²² Lynch and Pattison, *Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 420.

²³ Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London: Mowbray, 2009), 18.

²⁴ David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984).

²⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) and Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977).

²⁶ Lynch and Pattison, *Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 411. The critical dialogue is described in Pattison, "Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection" in Woodward and Pattison, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 135-145.

²⁷ Walton, "Teaching Theological Thinking in Practical Theology," 48.

Study of the church's ministry is an area in which there has been a weight of academic work: I wish to explore whether it is possible to establish a dialogue between these normative texts, contemporary experience and social sciences. PT will enable a three way dialogue between academic, practitioner-researcher and the often silent voice of lay members of churches. It reminds one to engage with existing theological disciplines, and facilitates dialogue with other disciplines in order to establish an authentic critical dialogue within a rich picture of a contemporary situation. PT offers an accommodating framework for the examination of lay-clergy relationships.

Part 2: Map Making

The study of PT has identified the need to establish a dialogue with the received texts of the Anglican tradition. My experience of work with other theologians and adult theological educators also strongly suggests that it is necessary to establish a sound foundation of academic theology in order to engage in the dialogue with credibility. As outlined above the following topics will reviewed:²⁸

Ecclesiology will be studied to identify changing patterns of church life which have impacted on the relationship between clergy and laity. Theologies of priesthood will be studied with a particular examination of the implicit understanding they contain regarding this relationship. The role and identity of laity will be studied in order to illuminate the current experience and expectations of the institutional church and its members.

Part 2.1 Ecclesiology

The first Christian topic to be examined is ecclesiology. I intend to carry out research in Church of England congregations, so I will not be looking at para-church organisations and events, such as Greenbelt, Soul Survivor, the Church

²⁸ See section 1.2, page 8.

Pastoral Aid Society and the burgeoning retreat movement. This review will examine the varied descriptions of the nature of the church, and the historical and theological influences on those ideas.

Did Jesus found a church, the institution being the culmination and essence of his mission? Or simply proclaim salvation for individuals who later found they benefited from the company of (some of) the others? Was the church part of the Gospel?²⁹ One might expect that the response to this question will affect the role and identity ascribed to members of the church, both lay and ordained.³⁰

2.1.1 Theological and Biblical approaches

Williams concludes that Jesus intended to establish redeemed relationships with people and God and between people, which are broken and betrayed at the crucifixion and their restoration is the primary evidence of the resurrection.³¹ The nature of the church is an encounter with God. Church is always event - a meeting with Jesus – before it is an institution. The Last Supper is a tangible expression of that: the Eucharist, performed by the church also forms the church as the Body of Christ. The Christian community is called to imitate Christ, to be the community gathered by Christ and to be His continuing presence in the world.³²

²⁹ Rowan Williams, “Keynote address at the Mission-Shaped Church conference on 23 June 2004” [article online]; available from www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/2004/040210.html; Internet; accessed 4 April 2010.

³⁰ Expressing a comparable polarity, Schleiermacher characterised Catholicism as asserting that an individual’s relation to Christ was dependent on their relation to the Church, Protestantism as an individual’s relation to the Church dependent on their relation to Christ. Miroslav Volf, *After Our likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 159, quoting Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith in Die Einheit in der Kirche*, 1825.

³¹ Rowan Williams, “Theological Resources for Re-examining Church” in Steven Croft, ed., *The Future of the Parish System* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), 49-60.

³² The church being the community who obey Christ’s command to ‘do this in remembrance of me.’ Luke 22: 18, cf. 1 Corinthians 11: 24-5 *The Revised English Bible* (Cambridge, Oxford: Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, 1989).

The implications of the position taken by Williams and others who trace a direct line from the disciples gathered around Jesus and the church of today is that the church is created by God's word of invitation and wherever the Spirit of Christ is present. This is an understanding of church which does not support institutional or hierarchical control, and, owing a debt to Moltmann, has been adopted by Liberation theologians.³³

One of the first documents of Vatican 11, *Lumen Gentium*³⁴ expressed the human and communal side of the church in the description: 'the people of God,' thereby claiming a link between the present church and the promises of God to ancient Israel. A renewed relationship between lay and ordained members of the Roman Catholic Church appeared possible, but in practice, understanding the church as necessary to salvation, being the living sign of God's presence and mediator of saving grace through sacraments and ministries, has contributed to a powerful institutional monopoly on grace.

Connected with the work of God but distinguishable from it, the church has been examined as a reflection of the nature of God. This has been expressed in the Biblical image of the Body of Christ, (see above) and, more recently, in terms of a fresh understanding of the Trinity.

Volf has analysed the work of Zizoulas and of Ratzinger, as theologians in their own right and as indicative of Roman Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiology. For Ratzinger, he argues, the letter of Paul to the Galatians is central: to believe in Christ is to enter the new Adam, the corporate personality (Gal 2:20).³⁵ In comparison, Zizoulas begins his theology from the basis of a eucharistic

³³ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

³⁴ Daniel Donovan, *What Are They Saying About the Ministerial Priesthood?* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992), 8.

³⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 33.

ecclesiology.³⁶ Renewal of interest in the social Trinity, displacing a hierarchical perspective, has resulted in an assertion that all life and structures of the church must be relational, not imitating, but reflecting the loving communion which exists within the Godhead. Volf asserts that a distinctively Protestant ecclesiology, based on the social trinity must pay due regard to individual autonomy as well as to corporate identity.³⁷ Also building on notions of the social Trinity, Feminist ecclesiology, exemplified by Russell, dismantled the idea of church as 'household ruled by patriarch' to 'a household around a common table, breaking bread and sharing conversation'.³⁸ It is apparent that recent ecclesiological work linking the nature of the church to the nature of the Trinitarian godhead, has concentrated attention on relationships within the church membership.³⁹

2.1.2 Modern ecumenical theology

In a like manner, modern ecumenical theology has understood the church as *koinonia*, interpreted as communion, fellowship, and participation.⁴⁰ An integrated understanding of mission, encompassing both social and evangelistic activity, was a feature of Western and, particularly ecumenical, debate in the twentieth century.⁴¹ This has been profoundly influential in the interpretation of the identity of the church and its members, since God's will is expressed in His

³⁶ Ibid., 73.

³⁷ Ibid., 176-180.

³⁸ Letty Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretations of Church* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1993), 2.

³⁹ Ruth Etchells, "Models of God" in Giles Ecclestone, ed., *The Parish Church?* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1988), 79-80.

⁴⁰ Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, 'The Final Report, Introduction' [article online]; available from www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_final.html; Internet; accessed 24 May 2010, paragraphs 4 & 5 'When the church is described as the body of Christ, the household of God, or the holy nation, the emphasis is on the relationships among its members as well as upon their relationship with Christ the Head.'

⁴¹ Simon Barrington Ward, "Theology of Mission" in Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds., *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1983), 372-5.

mission to the world, and the nature of relationships within it are part of the healing of a broken world.⁴² The visible *koinonia* of the church demonstrates what God intends for the whole of creation and humanity: a foretaste, sign and the instrument of the Kingdom.⁴³

2.1.3 Anglican ecclesiology

The most distinctive feature of Anglican ecclesiology in this country is the parish system, which is designed to ensure that 'throughout the country every acre is included within parish boundaries, confirming that the church accepts a care for all that takes place within the land.'⁴⁴ This commitment to local space, culture and inclusiveness has resulted in a diverse church, containing wildly different churchmanship, congregations and practices. Anglican ecclesiology may be described as pragmatic, rather than ideological; a theological reflection on the church which has resulted from political history and is the heir of Catholic and Reformed tradition.

Within the Church of England the most influential document in recent years has been the report, *Mission Shaped Church*.⁴⁵ Reflecting the insights of ecumenical ecclesiology, described above, it argues that the church's role may change over time and that the call of the moment is to express the values of a missionary Church. All structures and activities should, therefore, be focussed on the Trinity, and be incarnational, transformational, make disciples (faith sharing) and

⁴² World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church, Faith and Order Paper 181* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998).

⁴³ Lesslie Newbiggin, "On Being the Church for the World," 25-42.

⁴⁴ John Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* (London: Church Information Office, 1983), 2.

⁴⁵ Graham Cray, ed., *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

relational.⁴⁶ The Mission and Ministry report⁴⁷ also argues that mission and evangelization is the primary aim: structures and ministry must adapt to this.

2.1.4 Models of the Church

An alternative approach to ecclesiology, rather than seeking a single theological metaphor, is to suggest models to describe the character of the Church. (The use of models is itself a Biblical tradition: Minear lists 96!)⁴⁸ Dulles provided five models of the church: 'Institution,' 'Mystical Communion,' 'Sacrament,' 'Herald,' and 'Servant', believing that congregations will understand their own identity differently in relation to each.⁴⁹

The distinction between communal and associational churches has also become a useful comparison.⁵⁰ One is the religious aspect of a community and culture, the other a gathered congregation or voluntary association of individuals. Employing Schleiermacher's distinctions between Catholic and Protestant ecclesiology⁵¹ and Volf's analysis one must conclude that the Church of England is, at this time at least, a divided church, split between associational and communal models.

One may discern an increasing tendency for congregations to regard themselves as separate from the community around them, as faith becomes a cultural

⁴⁶ Graham Cray, "Focussing Church Life on a Theology of Mission" in Steven Croft, ed., *The Future of the Parish System* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), 61-74.

⁴⁷ The Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church: GS Misc 854* (London: Church House Publishing, 2007).

⁴⁸ Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961).

⁴⁹ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1988).

⁵⁰ Bruce Reed, *Dynamics of Religion: Process and Movement in Christian Churches* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979) and Giles Ecclestone, ed., *The Parish Church?* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1988).

⁵¹ See footnote 26, above.

deviancy.⁵² It would appear that membership of a congregation, sharing a common faith and lifestyle that is distinguishable from their neighbours, has become more significant than individual lay discipleship.⁵³ Tiller queries the effect on lay self image of participation in liturgy, ministry and mission: does this increase a sense of distinctiveness from the surrounding population?⁵⁴

2.1.5 The changing landscape

Tiller's report identified the local church, as the body of Christ in a particular place, responsible for undertaking the ministry of the gospel in its own area.⁵⁵ The Local Ministry movement has developed this ecclesiological understanding, and the implications for clergy-lay relations are discussed in Part 4.2.3. The ecclesiology that emerges from this perspective is one based in the experience and practice of the local church, rather than theological ideology or dictates of the hierarchy.

Aiming to study the church 'from below', a project at Exeter University, 'Towards an ideographic ecclesiology'⁵⁶ is engaging with the narratives of ministers in the region, particularly noting the influence of training and ecclesiastical institutions. While taking this approach it is worth comparing Davies' observation that

⁵² Grace Davie has discerned a shift "from obligation to consumption" within European religion. See "from Obligation to Consumption: Understanding the Patterns of Religion in Northern Europe" in Steven Croft, ed., *The Future of the Parish System*, 33-46. This is often expressed as the end of Christendom: Stuart Murray, *Church after Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004) and as a separation of faith from the church as it has been known: Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith* (London: SPCK, 2002).

⁵³ Malcolm Grundy, *Understanding Congregations* (London: Mowbray, 1998), 95.

⁵⁴ Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry*, 48.

⁵⁵ Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry*, 60.

⁵⁶ Available from <http://huss.exeter.ac.uk/theology/research/projects/exploring>; Internet; accessed 22 March 2010

doctrine may influence the way people organize their collective lives,⁵⁷ with Graham's assertion that practice informs belief.⁵⁸ As one enters this territory one is beginning to do congregational studies, a local, demotic, ecclesiology. Those who study practice have taken a fresh look at what constitutes a church. Davie has noted that there has been a shift in the significance of believing to that of belonging, though varying according to social groups, and gender.⁵⁹ Current observers note the significance of a third 'b,' that of 'behaviour.'⁶⁰ Cameron has identified five cultural forms of church, matching ways in which people gather and communicate in contemporary society.⁶¹ Clearly, study of the nature of the church cannot ignore the effect of cultural influences.

In this post Christendom world work done by Heelas, Woodhead, Seel and Tusting indicates that the area of spirituality is almost wholly separate from that of traditional congregations.⁶² Since my interest is in existing congregations, I will not engage in literature about post Christian spirituality, nor in why people leave churches.⁶³

An early attempt to discover 'views from the pews' recorded church members of many denominations agreeing that the purpose of the church was 'mission,'⁶⁴ though more recent studies may indicate differences in ecclesiology

⁵⁷ Douglas Davies, "Priests, Parish and People; re-conceiving a relationship" in Mathew Guest, Karin Tusting, and Linda Woodhead, eds., *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Context* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 153.

⁵⁸ Graham, *Transforming Practice*, 205.

⁵⁹ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 105, 120.

⁶⁰ Stuart Murray, *Church after Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).

⁶¹ Helen Cameron, *Resourcing Mission: Practical Theology for Changing Churches* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

⁶² Paul Heelas et al., *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2004), 12: 'Religion asks you to learn from the experience of others, spirituality urges you to seek your own.'

⁶³ Philip Richer and Leslie Francis, *Gone But Not Forgotten: Church Leaving and Returning* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998).

⁶⁴ British Council of Churches, *Views from the Pews* (London: British Council of Churches Publications, 1986).

between various groups. Cartledge, for example, has found an attitudinal difference between men and women, with men preferring masculine images and women feminine images of the Trinity, which also tend to be associated with specific social roles and models,⁶⁵ while Cameron has identified changes in patterns of affiliation, common to many voluntary bodies, requiring attention to commodification, co-option and privatisation.⁶⁶

2.1.6 The study completed above suggests the following observations regarding the study of lay-clergy relationships:

There is a broad diversity of Biblical and theological perspectives on the nature of the church, each with its concomitant understanding of the identity and role of priest and lay person. Perversely, they each share a sense that these are given, revealed perspectives, not open to negotiation or, in some cases, to local expression.

The relationship between the local church and the church universal is, therefore, also a variant.

The boundaries, or distinctions, within the church, and between the church and the local community will be influential in thinking about the nature of the mission of the church and the personnel engaged in it.

The prevalence of understanding relationship as significant in the churches' life, at the same time as membership of a faith community is a minority interest within society, is focusing attention on the congregation as the significant feature of church life.

⁶⁵ Mark J. Cartledge, "God, Gender and Social Roles: A Study in Relation to Empirical-Theological Models of the Trinity," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 22.2 (2009): 117.

⁶⁶ Helen Cameron, 'The Decline of the Church in England as a Local Membership Organisation: Predicting the nature of civil society in 2050' in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, eds., *Predicting Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 109-119.

Part 2.2 Priesthood

Understanding the nature of the ministerial priesthood is crucial to the study of lay clergy relations, since priesthood has been determinative of the ways in which both priests and laity are viewed. I was priested in 1993, six years after being made a deacon and have noted the variety of ways in which people have related to me at different stages. How might one explore this territory? Once again, I am most interested in the theology and practice of the Church of England, but being aware both of the influence of Hebrew Scripture and of other denominations on Anglican theology and of the value of a comparative study, other traditions will be considered. I will concentrate on the Conciliar and post Conciliar documents of the Roman Catholic Church, representative RC theologians, and recent documents of the Church of England and Anglican theologians. Though modern Orthodox theology is considered in the examination of the church and of the role of laity, the differing role and status of bishops and priests raises questions about the comparability of its traditions with Western orders.

2.2.1 Biblical and theological approaches

May the office of an ordained priest in today's church be traced to the Bible? The office of priesthood in the Jewish Scriptures describes an inherited role, a cultic dignitary who maintains the sacrificial system. In the early Christian communities there was no attempt to establish a comparable priesthood: Jesus was seen as the High Priest and the cultic offering of sacrifice had ended.⁶⁷ There were diverse forms of expressions of leadership, both local and catholic including the office of presbyter, or elder, which is always expressed in the plural as leadership was a collaborative enterprise. Recent work on the role of the deacon in the early Church has identified it as a mark of authorisation and commissioning by the

⁶⁷ This point is argued forcefully in Herbert Haag, *Clergy and Laity: Did Jesus want a Two-tier Church?* trans. Robert Powell (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1998).

Church.⁶⁸ Consequently, the *Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* report distinguishes between ministry, which is activity authorised and commissioned, and discipleship, which is the calling of each Christian.

But theologians differ in their estimation of the extent to which the Bible provides any kind of pattern for ministerial structures. While official statements of the Roman Catholic Church have linked the calling of the disciples and the commands given to them directly with the ministerial priesthood, reforming theologians have differed.⁶⁹ Schillebeeckx' work on the New Testament led him to assert that authority, leadership and institutional structures developed in response to situations both inside and outside the church so that an initially egalitarian society conformed to the hierarchy of the Greco-Roman household.⁷⁰ Kung notes a multiplicity of functions within the New Testament, but no notion of ecclesial 'office'.⁷¹ Those functions are described in terms drawn from the secular world, there is no use of cultic or sacred terms, such as 'priest.' In contrast, the House of Bishops of the Church of England, see the threefold order of bishops, priests and deacons emerging in the New Testament documents.⁷² Croft is likewise confident that this threefold pattern may be discerned in Scripture and offers an effective pattern for today's church.⁷³ This makes it hard for those not ordained to question the received authority of orders, and hard to argue for local contextual variation.

⁶⁸ The Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, GS Misc 854 (London: Church House Publishing, 2007).

⁶⁹ Donovan, What are They Saying about the Ministerial Priesthood? 98.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3, 60.

⁷¹ Hans Kung, *Why Priests?* (Collins: Fount Paperbacks, 1972), 28.

⁷² House of Bishops, *Eucharistic Presidency* (London: Church House Publishing, 1997). This responded to General Synod's request for a statement about 'the theology of the Eucharist and about the respective roles of clergy and laity within it.' Ibid., vii.

⁷³ Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008).

Congar studied the early church, all official church documents and the present situation, deducing that the early church asserted that the priest became a qualified celebrant of the Eucharist through being an ordained leader of the community, not through ordination⁷⁴ Based on a similarly rigorous study, Schillebeeckx stated the authority of a community to choose its priest had been accepted until the third Lateran Council of 1179. Now, he argued, a congregation may call out the priest, because of the pneumatic, prophetic and apostolic nature of the community as a whole.⁷⁵ The documents of Vatican 11 were more concerned with the position of the bishops and of laity than of the priesthood, but are significant in the use of the word *presbyter*, a relational office, in the title of *Presbyterorum ordinis*, deliberately changed from *sacerdos*.⁷⁶

2.2.2 Priesthood in Context

One concludes that theologies of priesthood are grounded not in the Bible, nor in Church tradition, but in the changing situation. It is, indeed, arguable that this is a truly biblical model, as the diversity expressed in the early church reflected the needs of each place. In meeting the new challenges, however, past authority is often sought, either to demonstrate that new innovations have always been so, or to seek a critical dialogue.

Designed to be a 'historico-sociological account of the development of the clergyman's role alongside the extensive theological literature on the nature of priesthood,' Anthony Russell's account of *The Clerical Profession* is convinced that the present state of the ministry is at least as revelatory as the first three centuries.⁷⁷ Recent works demonstrate awareness of the contemporary situation to varying extents. The confidence of Christendom is still evident in such works as

⁷⁴ Donovan, *What are they saying?* 46,47.

⁷⁵ Ibid.,103.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁷ Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London: SPCK, 1980).

Michael Ramsey *The Christian Priest Today*, published in 1972. By 2006, John Pritchard recognises the distance that must be travelled between the world and the church,⁷⁸ though the changes within the church, such as the increased participation of laity, are only addressed when the substantial work on the work and life of a priest is done in earlier chapters. Pritchard struggles to describe a pattern of prayer and discipleship that would distinguish the ordained from the laity. The need to listen to the contemporary world is justified by Martyn Percy, who asserts that using evolution as an analogical lens is appropriate since the incarnation of God is within time and culture and evolving understanding of revelation and humanity.⁷⁹

The perceived crisis of identity within the Roman Catholic priesthood, partly resulting from the recognition of the role of the laity, has certainly had its effect with Roman theology. Reacting to the perceived evils of the world, Ratzinger does not begin with observing the community and the various gifts and *charisms* that the Spirit pours out; his christocentric emphasis, rather, stresses separation, difference and resistance to the present evil of individualism.⁸⁰ Even within Anglican theology the link between the calling of the disciples and the ministerial priesthood has been re-asserted, and the representative role of the ordained priest further developed.⁸¹

The Bishop of Lichfield, in his invitation to the Maundy Thursday service in 2010, reflected on the criticism of the previous year's service when the laity had not been given the opportunity to renew their commitment to ministry: 'Some people feel that this is the only occasion in the year when the clergy can gather with their

⁷⁸ John Pritchard, *The Life and Work of a Priest* (London: SPCK, 2007).

⁷⁹ Martyn Percy, *Clergy: The Origin of Species* (London: Continuum, 2006), 177,178.

⁸⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 52-55.

⁸¹ House of Bishops, *Eucharistic Presidency* and Paul Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London: Continuum, T and T Clarke, 2005), 95.

bishops and renew their vows together as if in the Upper Room with the Lord'.⁸²

Affirmation of the clergy role may conflict with affirmation of the whole People of God, particularly at a time when vocations to the ordained ministry are decreasing.

2.2.3 The Priority of Mission

As noted in the survey of literature on the nature of the church, the subject of mission played a dominant role in 20th. Century thinking. The awareness of French bishops at the Second Vatican Council that much of Europe was now a mission field resulted in expansion of cultic and sacerdotal language to include every aspect of presbyteral life, including preaching and pastoral care.⁸³

The failure of the church in England to reach large sections of the community was realised in the 1980s. The Archbishop of Canterbury established a commission whose report affirmed the role of the laity and indigenous ministry as those who could communicate with people alienated or abandoned by traditional church structures.⁸⁴ Following closely on the Tiller report new enthusiasm for Ordained Local Ministers was evident. Later that decade a further report asserted the interdependence of lay and ordained ministry and concluded that together can do what neither can do alone and it is futile to attempt a theology of laity or of clergy alone.⁸⁵

The priority of mission is the basis of Avis' examination of ministry and mission.⁸⁶ Ordination, Avis claimed, changes a person's identity by the public recognition of

⁸² Bishop of Lichfield, Lichfield Diocesan Bulletin 241, 26 February 2010

⁸³ Donovan, *What Are They Saying?* 13.

⁸⁴ Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City* (London: Church House Publishing, 1985), 106.

⁸⁵ Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Occasional Paper, no 22* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987).

⁸⁶ Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission*, vii.

their gifts from God and ordination strengthens and authorises ministry in the church in the name of God, providing leadership to a church in mission.⁸⁷

The practice of the church is also demonstrated in its liturgy, expressed in the Latin phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi*, loosely translated as ‘the law of prayer is the law of belief’. It is therefore significant that the ordinal still contains the distinction between shepherd and sheep as a metaphor for the relationship of the priest to God’s people.⁸⁸ A belief in the necessity of leadership is found in even the most collaboratively minded theologians of the Local Ministry movement. Greenwood, for example, describes the priest as priest as the celebrant and facilitator of God’s grace.⁸⁹ Accepting that the majority of church members will lack enthusiasm for engagement with faith, scripture or prayer the ‘navigator’ is needed by the congregation so that they may exercise their God given ministries.⁹⁰ The priest, still one of the *laos* but with a specific role of presidency, discernment, blessing and witnessing, acts with their agreement. There is, thus, an unwritten contract between priest and people.

The demands of mission have located the role of the priest in relation to the whole people of God, offering teaching and leadership in outreach.

2.2.4 The contribution of the social sciences

It remains to ask whether the disciplines of psychology and sociology will offer fresh signposts as lay-clergy relationships are mapped. Contrasting the rhetoric with the reality, Percy quotes many examples from the past to describe the actual

⁸⁷ Ibid., 116.

⁸⁸ The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, ‘The Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters,’ (2006) [article online]; available from www.cof.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/ordinal/priests.html; Internet; accessed 24 May 2010.

⁸⁹ Robin Greenwood, *Parish Priests: For the Sake of the Kingdom* (London: SPCK, 2009), 44.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 60.

state of priesthood and threats to clerical identity.⁹¹ There is now, he notes, a problem of theological distinctiveness: what can be said of clergy that is not said of lay?⁹²

Yates has analysed the social construction of priesthood, a construct of mediaeval and postmodern discourse, with attendant epistemology and ontology.⁹³ The extent to which a priestly relationship is a construct offers considerable scope for further research. Russell notes the dependence of clergy on their congregations, expressed not only in crude financial terms, but also in accountability for the exercise of power and sacramentally, as they embody the congregation's values.⁹⁴ Avis responded to a perceived crisis of authority in the church and calls on the tools of sociology to establish an understanding of leadership that will deliver 'liberating authority'.⁹⁵ A connection, not only with the congregation, but the local community, is essential as the authority of church leaders is related to the advancement of the common goals of the community. Studies of the personalities of clergy may well indicate their fitness for such roles and the criteria by which they were selected. Research by Francis and Jones concludes they may be more likely to suffer from low self esteem than other members of the population.⁹⁶ Consequently they indicate a need for clergy to engage in relationships and mutual contracts with church members and those outside the church as a substantial element of their self understanding and identity. Further information about the psychological state of clergy may be gathered from the empirical work

⁹¹ Percy, *Clergy, the Origin of Species*, 24, 52.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹³ Paul Yates, "The Social Construction of Priesthood" *Theology* 101 (1998): 3-21.

⁹⁴ Russell, *The Clerical Profession*, 68, 112, 176.

⁹⁵ Paul Avis, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (London: Mowbray, 1992), x. Liberating authority is defined as therapeutic leadership enabling people to take responsibility for themselves within a secure framework and with constructive conflict.

⁹⁶ Leslie Francis and Susan H. Jones, "The Pastoral Care of the Anglican Clergy Today: A Matter of Low Self- Esteem?" *Journal of Empirical Theology* 16.1 (2003): 20-40.

that has been done in such areas as the likelihood of conflict, satisfaction, and self esteem.⁹⁷

2.2.5 Priesthood in relationship?

It is noteworthy that this review demonstrates that current theological work on the ordained ministry is examining clergy and laity as mutually interdependent and that sociologists and psychological study support this perspective. The nature of priesthood must be examined as a dynamic relationship, not a self-sufficient state.

Part 2.3 Perspectives on the identity of the laity

In order to examine relationships between lay and ordained members of the church it is now necessary to survey the literature on the nature of lay vocation and discipleship. Since I have worked with many lay people preparing for both authorised ministry and for dispersed discipleship I am acutely aware of their sense that their contribution and voice is neglected. The literature here is much sparser than the rich pastures of theologies of priesthood, but the past century has shown a flowering of interest in this area. Both the fruit of that interest and the possible reasons for it will be investigated.

2.3.1 Some definitions

Since ordained people represent only 3-5% of the church some have seen the idea of developing a theology of the laity separate from that of the church as a futile exercise.⁹⁸ But, for the sake of clarity in this study one may still ask 'Who are the laity?' The name is often said to derive from the *laos*, the people of God, but in fact all New Testament writers describe Jesus' followers as the *laos*, while in *koine*

⁹⁷ See, for examples, Yvonne Warren, *The Cracked Pot: The State of Today's Anglican Clergy* (London: Kevin Mayhew Ltd., 2002).

⁹⁸ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 2.

Greek *laikos* denoted the common people, a term of disparagement. The latter is first used of believers by Clement of Rome in the late first century, apparently to refer to those not fit to lead worship. From the later third and fourth century the term was used to refer to what was profane, not holy. The word translated as 'clergy,' *kleros*, means appointed or endowed ones and is used of the whole people of God in, for example; Colossians 1:12, Ephesians 1:11 and Galatians 3: 29

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Some distinction between clergy and laity was emerging just as, in the third century, the monastic lifestyle was also developed. Monks were called clerics and the ordained who led churches, the 'secular clergy.' A distinction between those who lived in the world and those whose primary vocation was monastic was more easily maintained than between clergy and lay.¹⁰⁰ Now, Weber notes, the situation of, say, lay theologians, salaried employees of the church, or volunteers in ministry, may be very different from that of church members who spend the majority of their time outside the institutional church environment.¹⁰¹ Thus the relationship between ordained and non ordained members of the church may vary according to time and circumstance. For the purposes of this essay I will use 'clergy' to refer to the ordained and 'laity' to refer to the non-ordained, employing 'lay' as an adjective for the latter. I will not be attempting to address issues relating to monks and nuns.

The two previous sections, on the church and on the priesthood, have already established some facts about the laity. These demonstrate that in the past the state of the clergy constituted the church. The First Vatican Council defined the

⁹⁹ For discussion of terms see R. Stevens, *The Abolition of the Laity* (Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1999), 5, 27, and Hans-Ruedi Weber, "On Being Christians in the World" in Nicholas Apostola, ed., *A Letter from Christ to the World* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 33.

¹⁰⁰ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 13.

¹⁰¹ Weber, *On Being Christians in the World*, 34.

laity simply as 'not clergy.'¹⁰² It is now apparent that interest in the Trinity has changed perception of the doctrine of the church, that Trinitarian ecclesiology has altered understanding of priesthood and of the life and work of ordained and lay members of the Church and an interest in the mission of God has changed the understanding of the role of laity and the interdependent relations between priesthood and laity.

Such interconnectedness renders a linear progression inadequate. This part of the review will complete the study of the church, priesthood and the laity, but each refers to, and changes the perspective of the other.

2.3.2 Biblical and theological approaches.

Biblical commentators describe a diversity of title and practice of lay ministry in the early church: but do not agree about the choice of passages to be studied, or the conclusions to be drawn from them. This may reflect the diversity of aims of such study: to justify lay ministry in contrast to clergy or to find a distinct identity, to protest at the current situation or to suggest a changing perspective. Each approach is reflected in the literature on the role of laity which is far more diffuse and disconnected than that in the topics of ecclesiology and the theology of priesthood.

Macquarrie's work, for example, combines Biblical and theological insight, taking examples of anointed prophets, those in more obviously secular roles and church leaders from both Old and New Testaments.¹⁰³ Lakeland, however, argues that there is a radical discontinuity in leadership between the Old and the New Covenant, since in the latter there is no priestly tribe and caste, the Holy Spirit is given to all as the mission of all Israel to be a ministering people is fulfilled.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 2.

¹⁰³ John Macquarrie, *The Faith of the People of God, A Lay Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1972).

¹⁰⁴ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 37.

Stevens argues that one cannot find a theology of laity in the New Testament, because there is no distinction between lay and ordained.¹⁰⁵ He does, however, also examine the roles of prophets, priests and kings and his exposition of these ministries in life of all God's people concludes that these should be expressed in a leadership team in a local church.¹⁰⁶

Stott concluded that there are distinctions made between mission and maintenance, leadership and care; but that each of these distinctions are for the sake of good order and effective teaching, not inherent in any ontological difference.¹⁰⁷ Those who view Jesus' calling and commands to his disciples as the gathering of proto-priests, or who discern the threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon in the early church, will disagree with these analyses.¹⁰⁸

The documents of Vatican II viewed the relationship between lay and ordained from a Christological perspective and affirmed that the whole church is together the Body of Christ. The interdependence of the issues of Church, mission, orders and discipleship was expressed as the Council viewed the laity in relation to their membership, participation and role in the mission of the church and the ordained priesthood in relation to its participation in the ministry of the episcopate and in relation to the community in which it serves.

Yet the understanding of the church as the body of Christ may not have a liberating effect for the laity. The ecclesiology of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, focussed on membership as incorporation into the body of Christ: de-individualization. Having neither individual discretion nor theological initiative

¹⁰⁵ Stevens, *The Abolition of the Laity*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁰⁷ John Stott, *One People* (London: Falcon, 1969), 44.

¹⁰⁸ See Part 2.2, Priesthood, for these discussions.

each member must wait for the church, as a corporate body, to provide direction about life and ministry.¹⁰⁹

It should be noted, however, that not all Christological theologies of the laity begin with the church as the body of Christ. For Macquarrie, the life and ministry of Christ is fundamental to any understanding of ministry and mission of people of God. They receive a commission from Him and from the Father (John 20: 21), to act as priests (1 Peter 2. 9) and to serve as He did.¹¹⁰ This perspective, recognising the role of laity distinct from their church membership, runs counter to more recent trends to emphasise the congregation and pay less attention to dispersed discipleship.

Recent interest in Trinitarian ecclesiology has had a direct effect on ideas about the identity and role of the laity. Stevens is optimistic that a fresh examination of the insights of the Cappadocian Fathers delivers an understanding of the church which is neither hierarchical (paternal), servile (christocentric) nor charismatic (spirit) but truly Trinitarian, a community without hierarchy, but one with designated roles.¹¹¹ Distinguishing between the church as a hierarchical institution and the church as the congregation of the faithful, Congar asserts that the laity make the church, as the society of the faithful,¹¹² while Schillebeeckx is even more radical in asserting that priesthood must grow out of the Christian community and function within a community that itself possesses and sets forth other spiritual gifts. An engaged laity is the necessary background for vocation to ordained life.¹¹³ In apparent agreement with this perspective, both Ratzinger and

¹⁰⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 69.

¹¹⁰ Macquarrie, *The Faith of the People of God*, 80.

¹¹¹ Stevens, *The Abolition of the Laity*, 58.

¹¹² Yves Congar, "Revisiting a Classic Description of the Laity's Role in the Church," [article online] available from www.jknirp.com/congar.html; Internet; accessed 24 March 2010.

¹¹³ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry, a Case for Change*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1981).

Zizoulas see the ordained ministry as, in some sense, dependent on the whole people of God. Ratzinger asserts that the whole church are the subject of the liturgical event, the priest is the subject only in so far as he embodies and interprets that subject.¹¹⁴ Zizoulas sees the Spirit constituting the church through the structured differentiations, expressed in the liturgy. The presence of the bishop and the laity are the most significant, the laity's role being to give the "amen" to the actions of the Bishop.¹¹⁵

This role for the laity is contrasted by Volf with that of the Free Church tradition, in which the relation of each individual to God is of great significance, and conscious acceptance of grace (and avoidance of deliberate sin) is possible, indeed, essential.¹¹⁶ Volf, himself wishes to be guided by Matthew 18: 20, Christ's presence being promised to a congregation, not to individuals.¹¹⁷ But the church is, usually, the mother of faith, the channel through which we receive, not the all embracing corporate body outside of which there is no individual cognition or volition.¹¹⁸

Volf's analysis represents the role of the laity within orthodox tradition as passive.¹¹⁹ Both the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, whether through theological conviction or the needs of mission, have found a much more active role and the remainder of this essay will examine those churches. I will first look at the results of theological work, then at the results of recent changes in church life.

¹¹⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 62.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹¹⁷ 'Where two or three meet together in my name, I am there among them.' Matthew 18: 20, The Revised English Bible (Oxford, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹¹⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 162 – 171.

¹¹⁹ A view supported by John A. Jillions, "Pastoral Theology: Reflections from an Orthodox Perspective" *British Journal of Theological Education* 13.2 (2003): 161-174.

2.3.3 The implications of ecclesiology for the life and work of laity.

It has already been seen that work on ecclesiology has resulted in a fresh perspective on the life and work of the laity in relation to that of ordained members of the people of God. There has been a biblical and theological rediscovery of the image of the Church as a people elected and sent for mission and service. The marginalisation of the institution, post Christendom, encourages this perspective.¹²⁰ Thus though, Congar asserts, the apostolate of the laity is grounded in their sacramental character derived from baptism and confirmation¹²¹ their unique contribution 'is to affirm the world and keep it related to the kingdom.'¹²²

Building on a full historical and international survey Neill concludes that 'the distinction between ordained and lay, between those whose sphere of service is primarily the church and those whose sphere of service is primarily the world, is a real one.'¹²³ This matches Lakeland's distinction between those who minister within the church and those who minister within the world, which, in his view, overrides the clergy-lay division.¹²⁴

It is possible to chart a drift from this vision to a concentration on lay involvement in the institutional church. Gibbs and Mortons' protest was at the way the clergy, who are paid to maintain the institution, have absorbed the time and energy of

¹²⁰ Stephen Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber, *The Layman in Christian History* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 377.

¹²¹ A view derived from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 3 q63, quoted in Yves Congar, *Laity, Church and World* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), 367.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 400-451.

¹²³ Neill and Weber, *The Layman in Christian History*, iii.

¹²⁴ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 267. Within Roman Catholic circles the terms 'apostolate' and 'ministry' are often used to describe these two spheres of activity.

lay people who should be equipped and active in the world.¹²⁵ The report from the Church of England's Board of Education *All are Called* declared an understanding of the calling of all God's people through baptism¹²⁶ and was followed by *Called to New Life* which recognized that, while the focus of lay life is in the world, some lay people will have a calling to authorised work within the church.¹²⁷ A subsequent report, from the Faith and Order department of the Church of England, *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* makes no reference to these reports and appears concerned to distinguish between 'ministry;' commissioned and authorized and 'discipleship;' what Christians do in daily life, for which Spirit gives gifts to all.¹²⁸ The involvement of lay people has, it appears, become so prevalent it needs to be regulated! There are echoes of official statements of the Roman Catholic Church that has retreated from the liberating attitudes of Vatican II to re-affirm the distinctive and exclusive position of the clergy.¹²⁹

In contrast to Stevens' passionate argument that the distinction between clergy and laity needs to be abolished, the theologians of the Local Ministry movement have argued for a new complementarity between ordained and lay, with a richer variety of categories of ministry.¹³⁰ But such complementary relationships are

¹²⁵ Mark Gibbs and Ralph Morton, *God's Frozen People: A Book for - and about - Ordinary Christians* (London: Fontana, 1971), 110.

¹²⁶ Board of Education, *All Are Called: Towards A Theology of the Laity* (London: Church Information Office, 1985).

¹²⁷ Board of Education, *Called to New Life* (London: Church House Publishing, 1991), 42.

¹²⁸ The Faith and Order Advisory Group, *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, 82.

¹²⁹ O'Brien presents a clear account of these developments in "The Theology of Lay Ministry" 88–95. The Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests (OCQ 1997) affirmed a distinction between the role of laity in the secular world and that of the ordained, possessing unique power in the sacred sphere. The laity no longer has a purely passive role, but the church has two distinct spheres of activity.

¹³⁰ See, for example, Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* and Robin Greenwood *The Ministry Team Handbook* (London: SPCK, 2001).

questioned when, in practice a far greater resource of people and money is invested in authorised ministry than in lay discipleship.¹³¹ The church's need for maintenance appears fuelled by a renewed emphasis on mission.

2.3.4 The role of the laity in mission.

Linking interest in the laity to the secularisation of society, Macquarrie identifies many areas of life where only the lay man (*sic*) penetrates and a lively lay apostolate is essential.¹³² But Diehl sharply criticises the church for the gap between Sunday faith and weekday world and between what the church proclaims is the role of laypeople and what it does to support that role.¹³³ While the *Called to New Life* report asserts that faith and discipleship have little to do with the church as institution,¹³⁴ Volf notes that lay members' willingness to share their faith, and capacity to do so, is closely related to their participation and identification with Christian community.¹³⁵ The relation between membership of the Christian community and lay discipleship remains unresolved.

By contrast, many recent books and reports have spoken of the lay role in the church-organised mission.¹³⁶ Such an approach runs the risk of '*Church-shaped Mission*,' in John Hull's phrase.¹³⁷ The present pressures, especially on stipendiary clergy, to add to regular attendance at church and to ensure that the diocesan quota is paid may well concentrate their minds on these tasks, and mission as a

¹³¹ Board of Education, *All are Called*, 18.

¹³² Macquarrie, *The Faith of the People of God*, 87.

¹³³ William E Diehl, *Christianity and Real Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

¹³⁴ Board of Education, *Called to New Life*, 35.

¹³⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 18.

¹³⁶ E.g. Faith and Order Advisory Group, *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, Bob Jackson, *The Road to Growth: Towards a Thriving Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005) and Mike Chew and Mark Ireland, *How to do Mission Action Planning* (London: SPCK, 2009).

¹³⁷ John Hull, *Mission Shaped Church - A Theological Response* (London: SCM Press, 2006).

way of achieving them. Conflict between the aspirations of clergy and of the church members is a continuing possibility.

2.3.5 Distinctions between priesthood and laity.

Theological disquiet about the relationship between the ministry of laity and the ordained remains. John Tiller, discussing resistance to an earlier report on the deployment and payment of clergy, acknowledged that the ordination of non stipendiary clergy could be seen as 'the laicization of the priesthood.'¹³⁸ Fears about the confusion of overlap between categories of ministry are also evident in the *Ministry and Mission of the Whole Church* report. It set out, among other matters, to clarify the distinction between lay and ordained ministry and, in particular, to address the apparent blurred boundary between the diaconate and Reader ministry.¹³⁹ The report, however, concludes that absolute clarity between categories is neither faithful to the biblical tradition, nor an advantage in missionary endeavour, where complementarity and interdependence are called for.

It is apparent that the anger and energy of such as Gibbs and Morton, and of the Audenshaw papers which were the result of their efforts at galvanising lay people to action, is no longer evident.¹⁴⁰ The work of the World Council of Churches, influential in this country, on the role of the laity, was most active in the 1970s.¹⁴¹ The ordination of women to the diaconate in 1987 and to the priesthood in 1993, and the proliferation of non stipendiary ministries, ordained and lay, has reduced the sharp distinction between those who are ordained, participating in leadership

¹³⁸ John Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry*, 47 quoting Leslie Paul, *The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy* (London: Church Information Office, 1964).

¹³⁹ Faith and Order Advisory Group, *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, 78.

¹⁴⁰ The Audenshaw papers are circulated four times a year to subscribers and are downloadable from the website of the Hinksey Network: www.hinksey.org/audenshaw.

¹⁴¹ Neill and Weber, *The Layman in Christian History*, 377-394.

and liturgy, and those who are not. The clear message that the laity are vital to the work of the mission of the church has given a focus and direction to lay ministry but, perhaps, narrowed its scope.

2.3.6 What further questions arise?

This study has highlighted unresolved theological and practical questions about the current relations between clergy and laity in the Church of England. These include:

Have those who would champion a dispersed role for the laity left the church?
Have the remaining laity been thoroughly clericalized, giving their time and energy to the institutional church?

Is the significant distinction within congregations not between clergy and laity, but between those who work within ecclesial institutions and those who see their primary focus of discipleship as in a secular sphere?

Has the focus on the churches' collective role in mission increased the significance of the congregation as an entity to be examined, rather than lay discipleship?

Part 3: A Practical Theology Companion: The Work of R.A. Lambourne

Having examined the literature relating to ecclesiology, the priesthood and lay discipleship, this section will enter into dialogue with a noted pastoral theologian, Bob Lambourne. Both his approach to these subjects, as a layman, and his methodology offers useful indicators for further research, but his work has not been considered by those who have written in these areas. It will be shown, however, that his focussed attention on the human need for healing presents a radical understanding of the role of the church, which challenges other, more generalised, approaches.

There might appear to have been more obvious dialogue partners and two caveats should be entered at this point.¹⁴² Firstly, it would be a distortion of Lambourne's ideas to assume, or impose, some order which was not present and secondly, this danger is compounded by the temptation to remould his work to fit my own agenda. An initial reading might indicate that he has not entered debates about church and ministry, but further reading, especially of the collected papers, show that these concerns were never far from his mind. The fact that he is not cited by other writers demonstrates the restricted nature of debate within disciplines. His value is as a dialogue partner who is less weighted down by received tradition, off the beaten track, as it were, and I have selected him as a travelling companion for this reason.

Robert Alfred Lambourne practised as a GP in Birmingham for 10 years to 1958. In 1960 he studied for a BD, followed by study and practice in psychiatry.¹⁴³ His experience abroad in 1969 and association with the Medical Mission of the WCC convinced him of the danger of exporting the growing individualistic direction of Western medicine overseas. In 1963 he was appointed Director of the Diploma in Pastoral Studies at Birmingham University, the first of its kind in Britain and continued to make a significant contribution to the development of that discipline.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² For example, Browning, who has carried out research into congregational life: Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) or, for the perspective of a lay women working in the UK, Elaine Graham, *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood, Theology* (London: Mowbray, 1995).

¹⁴³ For further details of Lambourne's life, see Michael Wilson, ed., *Explorations in Health and Salvation. A Selection of Papers by Bob Lambourne* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Institute for the Study of Worship and Religious Architecture, 1983), 2.

¹⁴⁴ Further details of this course are found in Paul Ballard, "The Emergence of Pastoral and Practical Theology in Britain" in Woodward and Pattison, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 59 – 70.

3.1 Introduction to Lambourne's ideas and use of terms

I have examined Lambourne's book, *Community, Church and Healing*¹⁴⁵ the representative sample of his papers, published as *Explorations in Health and Salvation*¹⁴⁶ and other papers and articles that add to an understanding of his ideas. Having established the direction of his thought the themes chosen for my own research will be re-examined to see whether Lambourne's ideas throw fresh light on them. I do not, however, address many of Lambourne's central concerns about the ethics and philosophy of medicine, nor engage, on his terms, with his concepts maps.¹⁴⁷ The categories in which I discuss his work are my own, but I have tried to allow Lambourne himself to speak to them, both in content and in the methodological approach.

In *Community, Church and Healing* Lambourne explored the hypothesis that 'sin and sickness are symptoms of communal disorder, are experienced by the community, and yield to therapeutic measures designed to improve the community considered as an organic whole.'¹⁴⁸ He found in the Old Testament a community where there was collective responsibility for sins and a communal

¹⁴⁵ R.A. Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing. A Study of Some of the Corporate Aspects of the Church's Ministry to the Sick* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963).

¹⁴⁶ M. Wilson, ed., *Explorations in Health and Salvation*.

¹⁴⁷ These maps are found in papers in Lambourne, *Explorations in Health and Salvation*, paper 1972-1b "Mental Health, Christian Medical Mission and the Future Concept of Comprehensive Health Care," 70-80, paper 1968-2 "The Birmingham University Diploma In Pastoral Studies Course" 190-201, paper 1971-5a, "Models of Health and Salvation- Secular and Christian" 202-216, and paper 1969-5b, "Towards an understanding of medico-theological dialogue" 217-227. They chart personal, communal and political interpretations of healing.

¹⁴⁸ Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing*, vii.

search for healing.¹⁴⁹ He examined Christ's healing ministry and deduced that he healed publicly, and that those who observed these healings were judged by their reactions.¹⁵⁰ His theology is thus rooted in his own reading of the Bible, especially of the Gospels, rather than study of other theologians or commentators. He believed that the Bible could be read as containing eternal truths and, in particular, that the Church's ministry today could be an imitation of Jesus' life and ministry. His confidence that the Gospels contained an accurate record of Jesus' life is far from universally shared today, but in this, and in his approval of the world view of ancient Israel and reliance on word studies, Lambourne was in tune with the post-war Biblical Theology movement.

Lambourne was firmly convinced of the inter-relatedness of sickness and sin, of health and community and of 'Medicine' and the Church.¹⁵¹ He called on the church to become a therapeutic community through identification with those who suffer and through offering a sacramental ministry.

The papers collected in *Explorations in Health and Salvation* by Michael Wilson cover a wider variety of forms and are largely reactions to particular situations. Lambourne's starting point is his perception of the human need for healing and the identity of the church is deduced from this role. It is appropriate, then to discuss his understanding of the work of the church before looking at his understanding of its nature.

3.2.1 Work of the Church.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., "The Community in the Old Testament," 23-32.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., "The New Testament and the Community," 33-44.

¹⁵¹ Lambourne used 'Medicine' and 'Church' with the upper case, to refer to the institutions, officers and ideologies of these concepts and with a lower case to denote the routine practice of the same. M. Wilson, ed., *Explorations in Health and Salvation*, iv.

Lambourne saw both health and salvation as requiring, not the treatment of disease in a specialist centre, but care from the whole community.¹⁵² The church should not limit itself to an involvement in so-called 'spiritual healing,' but develop therapeutic communities where the needs of one person are recognised as a problem shared by the whole group.¹⁵³ The local church is well placed to build community and this will be of especial value in the healing of mental distress.¹⁵⁴ The particular role of the church, which others cannot fulfil, is to live a sacramental life, connecting Christ's life of healing with his sacrificial offering of his own body. In the Eucharist Christ is made present both in the bread and wine and in the company of people present, which will include those who suffer.

While Zizoulas sees the church as constituted by the Eucharist - the gathering of those who are faithful to Christ's command to 'do this in remembrance of me,'¹⁵⁵ Lambourne viewed these words not as command, but as a promise of God's presence. For Williams the Eucharist is the tangible expression of the redeemed relationships made possible by Christ's life and death,¹⁵⁶ but Lambourne indicated that the true mystical body of Christ may not be the 'ecclesiastical apostolic congregation' we call church, but the fellowship of all those who suffer and who join in the work of healing.¹⁵⁷ He was greatly influenced by the parable of the sheep and goats,¹⁵⁸ and he believed obedience and true remembrance of Christ is

¹⁵² Ibid., 28. True healing is 'a satisfactory response to a crisis, made by a group of people, both individually and corporately.'

¹⁵³ Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., "Mental Health and the Local Community," 12-22.

¹⁵⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 73.

¹⁵⁶ Rowan Williams, "Theological Resources for Re-examining Church," 58.

¹⁵⁷ Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing*, 72, 88.

¹⁵⁸ This is recorded in Matthew chapter 25, especially verse 40 'anything you did for one of my brothers here, however insignificant, you did for me.' *The Revised English Bible*.

through acts of healing. He was keen for this to be expressed in a new sacrament that *intentionally* remembers Christ's command and example.¹⁵⁹ 'The sacrament of mercy done by all sorts and condition of men in the medical services *is made manifest* by the word and work of the Church, by its own healing and preaching.'¹⁶⁰

3.2.2 The nature of the Church

Lambourne believed the local church could encourage a life of service from its members and be involved in local community action.¹⁶¹ He has little to say about the regional or national church. He is confident of the local congregation's capacity for positive action, not sharing the hesitations of those who doubt whether such a community can help in many situations of distress.¹⁶²

This is an ecclesiology that emphasises the corporate calling of the congregation to be a worshipping, learning, healing, and serving community.¹⁶³ Though the church's rationale is healing, the fellowship of people which Christ has called will

¹⁵⁹ This new sacrament is described in the seventh chapter of Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing* 74-89, and in Lambourne, "The cup of water and the cup of blessing," *Theology* 64, (1961): 356-63. A shortened form of this article is found in M. Wilson, ed., *Explorations in Health and Salvation*, 44-48.

¹⁶⁰ M. Wilson, ed. *Explorations in Health and Salvation* 47. (My italics).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 168-169.

¹⁶² Mark Sutherland, for example, discusses various kinds of psychiatric distress and suggests some are more amenable to church involvement than others. Lambourne particularly favoured small group therapy, which may be a disputed choice. Mark Sutherland, "Towards Dialogue: An Exploration of the Relations between Psychiatry and Religion in Contemporary Mental Health" in James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 272 – 282.

¹⁶³ Nicholas Bradbury, "Ecclesiology and Practical Theology" in *Ibid.*, 173-182.

include both the healthy and the sick, for Christ is present with those who suffer. There are hints that suffering itself is redemptive, but this is not developed.¹⁶⁴ It is a picture of the church rooted in the present, in which the eschatological promise of an end to suffering is mentioned, but as a far distant hope.¹⁶⁵ The work of healing may, indeed, bring distress to the church: persecution for the early Church began after the first healing by Peter and John, recorded in Acts 3: 12-19.

Lambourne arrived at an egalitarian model of relationships within the church which is comparable to that of feminist theologians.¹⁶⁶ His aversion to the monopoly of both physical and spiritual healing by a small class of experts and his appreciation of the contribution of a wide range of carers, leads to an understanding of church as a fellowship of many *charisms*.¹⁶⁷ The local church, he wrote, is 'called to be what it is; the people of God and the body of Christ, unhindered by barriers between work and worship, minister and layman, church building and church, churchgoer and parish resident.'¹⁶⁸

3.3 Priesthood

The role of the priest is discussed only so far as the work of the church in healing is affected. Lambourne often compared the ordained priest with the doctor, as they have both developed within an increasingly professional culture, where it appears that the institution serves the needs of the minister/doctor, not of the patient/parishioner.¹⁶⁹ He finds a particular role for the ordained ministry in the

¹⁶⁴ Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing*, 138.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶⁶ e.g. Russell, *Church in the Round* and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

¹⁶⁷ He has no doubt that clergy fall into the category of professional, just as doctors do. This has been disputed. Russell, *The Clerical Profession* and Percy, *Clergy, The Origin of Species*, 160-164.

¹⁶⁸ Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing*, 112.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

care of the dying. The minister (a term preferred to 'priest') 'has a capacity to live a life of certitude in the very presence of a sense of the deepest frustration, the deepest fear of the unknown and the deepest pain,'¹⁷⁰ because sustained by a life of prayer, the sacraments, scripture, and the faith and love of the congregation. Priestly formation happens in the exercise of office.

3.4 Lay people

It could be said that Lambourne had a functional view of priesthood, but an ontological view of whole people of God, as the body of Christ. Within the whole body of Christ, each person may find their role in the healing work.

Lambourne argued for a prominent role for laity, not because he wished to denigrate ordained ministry, but because he saw the need to redress the balance that existed and because he saw the successors to Christ in his healing ministry as, primarily, the laity.¹⁷¹ He paid particular attention to the exact nature of the care to be given in Christ's name. Pastoral care, rather than a professional response to individual need, should be 'lay, voluntary and diffuse in the community.'¹⁷² The involvement of volunteers, the communal and corporate base, and the care for those who are incurable as well as the prevention or eradication of defects in individuals are all essential.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ "The care of the dying," Paper no. 1965-2, in M. Wilson, ed., *Explorations in Health and Salvation*, 38-43.

¹⁷¹ Lambourne, *Community, Church and Healing*, 96.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 125-134.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 82, 83. Lambourne identified a particularly feminine gift of 'caring without the pride of curing.'

Lambourne criticised those who adopted the paradigm of unconditional love as the guiding principle of theology and therapy.¹⁷⁴ It is in the area of the nature of pastoral care that Lambourne has attracted most attention. Pattison has noted Lambourne's critique of the exercise of pastoral care in a professionalised environment, guided by humanist philosophy,¹⁷⁵ while Campbell, working with the metaphor of the Christian counsellor as a 'fool,' challenging the system, appreciates the warnings given by Lambourne of the consequences of leaving care to the professionals.¹⁷⁶ Pattison agrees that a separation of 'love' and 'justice' will result in pastoral care that treats symptoms, but does not challenge the social and political order.¹⁷⁷ Believing the 'foolishness of faith,' will be one such challenge, Campbell devotes the seventh chapter of *Moderated Love* to the sacrament of caring, inspired by Lambourne's vision of the sacrament of a cup of cold water.

Lambourne's influence in the area of lay ministry has been largely in terms of the nature of pastoral care rather than his radical ideas about the role of the congregation in co-operation with medical practice. His concern at the professionalization of both medical and spiritual care was a contribution to a developing distrust of the institutionalisation of society resulting from the powerful monopoly of professionals. This was matched, though by his optimism that the kingdom of God could be formed in secular society, by those unconscious

¹⁷⁴ Describing this as 'Counselling for Narcissus, rather than Counselling for Christ' in *Ibid.*, 135-161. This is further expanded in "The Social Sciences and the Work of the Church VI paper on Authority and Acceptance in Pastoral Counselling," *Expository Times* 81, (1970): 231.

¹⁷⁵ Stephen Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 2000), 24. The debate is continued in "Objections to a National Pastoral Organisation," *Contact* 35 (1971): 24-31 with a response by H. Clinebell in the subsequent edition.

¹⁷⁶ Alastair Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*, 2nd ed. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 59.

¹⁷⁷ Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, 91, referring to Lambourne, "Personal reformation and political formation in pastoral care," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 25 (1971): 182-7.

of being divine agents. Both ideas were, eventually, more coherently articulated by others.¹⁷⁸

3.5 Lambourne's legacy

Lambourne's writing demonstrates optimism both about the Bible's capacity to address directly the needs of contemporary, secular, society and about the local church's role and response. While Biblical scholarship is now sceptical in the search for the historical Jesus, church members continue to be inspired to act in imitation of the picture of Jesus portrayed.¹⁷⁹ The focus of activity is, however, on church based outreach, not on individual or even collective discipleship in a dispersed mission.¹⁸⁰ Lambourne's identification of healing as the church's *raison d'être* challenges other writers who attempt to define the church in terms of its mission, but are less clear about what that mission is.

This analysis of Lambourne's work has demonstrated how a pastoral theology can be developed from observation of the needs of contemporary society and the society found in the Biblical world; and making links between his knowledge and reading of medical needs and the healings of Jesus. He fails, however, to pay adequate attention to the differences in the two societies, advocating the establishment of a communal responsibility found in his reading of the Old Testament in a Britain that was already, in the 1960s, fragmentary and diffuse. Though I am less confident than Lambourne about the identification of the Gospel record with the words and actions of the historical Jesus I recognise his vision of the church as a place of healing as a true reflection of the Christian tradition. But his reading of the gospel records themselves exclude interpretations which

¹⁷⁸ Notably, Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1974) and Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Collier Books, 1965).

¹⁷⁹ By, for example, Ann Morisy, *Beyond the Good Samaritan* (London: Mowbray, 1997).

¹⁸⁰ As discussed in Section 2.3 Laity.

conflict with his understanding: places where Jesus is recorded as healing from compassion, for example or ascribing the healing to the faith of others.¹⁸¹ His work, then suffers from a lack of critical reading of the Bible, which takes account of the diverse worlds within Biblical cultures, the belief in demon possession and the expectation of the imminent end of time in 1st century Palestine.¹⁸² Thus the observation made earlier, that PT requires a sound knowledge of Biblical and theological tradition, is re-inforced.¹⁸³ His understanding of the need of society for healing is similarly narrow in its scope, and limiting of the breadth of mission. More detailed cultural exegesis and mission audit is required to listen to the needs of society.

Though I applaud the interweaving of his understanding of the nature of the church, the theology of priesthood and the role of the laity I think coherence and consistency may have been achieved at the expense of an open-minded reading of the Bible and of the society around him. In my own research I would like to imitate his openness to the work of secular practitioners, and concern for the needs of those beyond the church, but explore a much broader interpretation of the mission of the church.

Part 4: Signposts: The study of clergy-lay relationships in Church of England congregations.

The setting of this study within PT, the review of literature which sheds light on the theological traditions and dialogue with Lambourne have each demonstrated

¹⁸¹ Examples of Jesus healing after feeling compassion include the widow's son, Luke 7: 11-17. Examples of Jesus ascribing the healing to the faith of the one healed include the Canaanite women, Matthew 15: 21-31 and Luke 8: 48. The Revised English Bible.

¹⁸² Dennis Nineham, *The Church's Use of the Bible* (London: SPCK, 1963), 145 and *Saint Mark* (London: Penguin, 1963), 51, 52.

¹⁸³ See Part 1.2 The Elements of Practical Theology.

that the particular nature of Anglican congregations means that an examination of the relations between clergy and laity cannot ignore the historical and theological rationales given for the church's life and practice. Ecclesiology, priesthood and lay theology are the unseen forces in congregational life, tripping up the naïve researcher and clashing with each other in sub-liminal ways. Disputes and discontent in church life may present with other issues, but underlying questions of the nature of the church and the nature of ministry may be discerned, not as side issues, but as unspoken and hence unresolved, disagreements.¹⁸⁴ Yet the demands of mission and the attractive pattern of the co-operative relationships of the Trinity make good relationships within the faith community all the more desirable. Missiology and theology appear to have changed the agenda for discussion: in past decades, as has been shown, debate covered the issues of the theology of priesthood, the imperative of a dispersed lay discipleship and widespread anti-clericalism. Literature in the 21st century concentrates more heavily on the exercise of church focussed mission by the whole people of God, albeit clergy led. Relationships within the church must bear the weight of these hopes and expectations.

4.1 Causes of conflict in lay-clergy relationships

Research on relationships between the laity and clergy has ranged from the violent anticlericalism of past centuries,¹⁸⁵ the frustrations of the mid twentieth

¹⁸⁴ This view is supported by Stephen Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 31.

¹⁸⁵ Nigel Aston and Matthew Cragoe, eds., *Anticlericalism in Britain c 1500-1914* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001).

century¹⁸⁶ and recent work on collaborative ministry for the sake of the Kingdom.¹⁸⁷

In 1980 Anthony Russell referred to the 'constant reference by the laity to domineering clericalism.'¹⁸⁸ Charting the incidence of anticlericalism in the 19th century, Mcleod noted that one of the seven reasons he identified was 'still with us today:' the belief that clergy were out of touch with the real world.¹⁸⁹

Tantalisingly, Mcleod gives no further indication of the reasons for this statement, but his investigations of Punch cartoons, depicting the otherworldliness of clergy does suggest that an examination of contemporary popular culture might yield a similar result.

Though there is a great deal of material on relationships within the Roman Catholic Church, much concerned with recent clerical abuse scandals, this study will focus on the situation in the Church of England.

My own interest in this subject is triggered by my research that indicated a profound sense of difference between clergy and laity, though that distance could be marked by respect as well as by suspicion.¹⁹⁰ In the middle of the 20th century anger was expressed by laity that they were being prevented from carrying out their role by the absorption of the clergy in the institution, and reasons for disliking the clergy were clearly articulated: the educational differences and privileged position of freeholder's contracts contrasted with a growing dependence on financial support by the laity and the ignorance of clergy about

¹⁸⁶ Mark Gibbs and T. Ralph Morton, *God's Frozen People: A Book for - and about - Ordinary Christians* (London: Fontana, 1971).

¹⁸⁷ See Greenwood, *Parish Priests*, for a recent bibliography.

¹⁸⁸ Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ Hugh Mcleod, "Varieties of Anticlericalism in later Victorian and Edwardian England" in Aston and Cragoe, eds., *Anticlericalism in Britain c 1500-1914*, 201.

¹⁹⁰ Jordan, "The Place of Ordained Local Ministry in the Church of England," 219-232.

non-church life. The image of sheep and shepherd, (retained in the Common Worship ordinal published in 2006) was seen as demeaning in 1960.¹⁹¹

Russell charted the way in which the clerical profession has diverged from the practices of other professions through a failure to work in teams, so that individual priests are distanced from both the laity and fellow clergy.¹⁹² Yet working together can itself result in role confusion¹⁹³ and conflict in aims between clergy and laity.¹⁹⁴ Davie finds that Anglican clergy are considerably more liberal and left wing than Anglican laity.¹⁹⁵ Dempsey identified theological differences between lay and clerical members of an Australian Methodist congregation,¹⁹⁶ while Jarvis concluded that the distinction lay between those who have received structured theological training, both clergy and lay and those who had not.¹⁹⁷

These works identify an ambiguity at the heart of the relationship between clergy and church members, summed up by Cameron's question: 'Colleagues or Clients?'¹⁹⁸ Is the congregation the recipient of the ordained person's ministry or co-labourers? Is the role of the ordained to pastor the congregation or the whole

¹⁹¹ Kenneth Grubb, *A Layman Looks at the Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 50-71.

¹⁹² Russell, *The Clerical Profession*, 259.

¹⁹³ S.C. Monahan, "Role Ambiguity among Protestant clergy," *Review of Religious Research* 41 (1999): 80-95.

¹⁹⁴ C. Spencer, "The Clergy in Secular Society," in P.G. Forster, ed., *Contemporary Mainstream Religion: Studies from Humberside and Lincolnshire* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 46-77.

¹⁹⁵ Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945*, 155.

¹⁹⁶ K. C Dempsey, "Conflict in Minister/Lay Relations," in David Martin, ed., *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 2 (London: SCM, 1971), 58-74.

¹⁹⁷ Peter Jarvis, 'The Ministry-Laity Relationship: A case of potential conflict,' *Sociological Analysis* 37.1 (1976): 74-80.

¹⁹⁸ Helen Cameron, "Colleagues or Clients? The relationship between clergy and church members," in Nigel Malin, ed., *Professionalism, Boundaries and the Workplace* (London: Routledge, 1999), 106-119.

community?¹⁹⁹ These questions are at the heart of the Church of England's identity, being established as a national church, broad enough for all and with a ministry to all parishioners. The word 'congregation' has been loaded with unpleasant association with sects and denominations yet signs of development from a communal model of churchmanship to an associational one indicates a change in self perception. This development is noted in the essays edited by Ecclestone, published in 1988,²⁰⁰ eighteen years later the question posed in a collection of essays edited by Croft was whether the parish system has a future at all.²⁰¹ One should note that, as in any relationship, gender issues may be relevant. The effect of calling some male priests 'Father' and of the difference that women priests have made to the lay-clergy relationship requires further study. It is interesting that, while some congregations may perceive women as more approachable, the selection process apparently favours men with traditionally feminine characteristics and women with traditionally masculine characteristics, for the stipendiary ministry.²⁰²

Awareness of the 'clerical paradigm' of theological education²⁰³ developed through the twentieth century, as demand for access to theological education became part of lay discontent. Adult theological education is both an indicator of lay-clergy relationships and an agent of change and the Audenshaw papers, produced for lay people 'engaging in the search for purpose and meaning in

¹⁹⁹ Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and Barbara G. Wheeler, *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), xiii.

²⁰⁰ Giles Ecclestone, ed., *The Parish Church? Explorations in the Relationship of the Church and the World* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1988).

²⁰¹ Croft, ed., *The Future of the Parish System*.

²⁰² Leslie Francis and Mandy Robbins, "Personality profile of selected and non selected candidates for ministry," *Contact* 1.1 (1996): 26-32.

²⁰³ Identified by Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

public issues on the economic situation'²⁰⁴ frequently express the need for equal funding encouragement and resources as clergy receive.²⁰⁵ The tension that exists between preparation for authorised ministry in the church and for dispersed ministry is discussed by Wilton.²⁰⁶ Pickard's survey of the theological work done on the relationship between clergy and lay demonstrates the theological interdependence of all forms of ministry, while acknowledging the inadequacy of any theological work at this present time to illuminate the nature of the relationship.²⁰⁷

Further evidence of the strains on clergy come from Savage's study of the psychological burden of both the positive and negative features of the parish system, which, she asserts, is borne by clergy.²⁰⁸ Such issues as the hierarchical structure, the 'expectation of niceness,' conflict between clergy and volunteers on mission and maintenance priorities, the presence of those with narcissistic personality disorder in church, poor supervision and role conflict and over-work exacerbate poor relations.

Lastly, one may ask to what extent differentiation between clergy and lay is one that is actively encouraged by contemporary theological educators and the literature on leadership.²⁰⁹ Eddie Gibbs, for example, urges the necessity of leadership training, so that leaders are able to lead, not be pushed by their

²⁰⁴ Available by subscription from The Hinksey Network, 3 Thorne Park Road, Torquay TQ2 6RX

²⁰⁵ e.g. Hans Ruedi-Weber, "The battle is not yet won," *Audenshaw Papers*, Hinksey Network, Paper no 63.

²⁰⁶ Gary Wilton, "From ACCM 22 to Hind via Athens and Berlin: A critical analysis of key documents shaping contemporary Church of England theological education with reference to the work of David Kelsey," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 4.1 (2007).

²⁰⁷ Pickard, *Theological Foundations*, 110.

²⁰⁸ Sara Savage, "On the Analyst's Couch" in Croft ed., *The Future of the Parish System*, 16-32.

²⁰⁹ Exemplified by the chapter heading: "Public Ministry: The importance of distance" in Alistair Redfern, *Ministry and Priesthood* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 20-35.

congregations.²¹⁰ While much literature reminds the priest that they remain a deacon (and bishops that they remain priests), few assert that the ordained remain lay.²¹¹ The distinction between sheep and shepherd does not encourage inter-species relationships!

It is notable that, in the face of a large amount of literature about clergy identity and the possibility of poor relationships with laity, case studies of real congregations demonstrate little open hostility. Cameron suggests that open conflict is avoided in churches and is informally managed by the clergy.²¹² Anti clericalism and articulated lay anger appears to have been replaced by a fear of open conflict and co-operation, willing or otherwise, for the sake of the local churches' future. My own experience of being asked on several occasions to act as a mediator in disputes between congregations and their stipendiary clergy has suggested a level of misunderstanding and suspicion. I wish to investigate more precisely the causes of such discontent.

The study of ecclesiology has noted the way that attention to the social Trinity has resulted in increased importance being paid to relationships within the Church body, as expressive of those within the Trinity. The studies of church and the roles of its ministers, lay and ordained, have demonstrated a developing emphasis on the church as the sign, foretaste and instrument of the Kingdom. While the role of lay people in dispersed ministry continues to be stressed in the Roman Catholic Church, distinct from a priestly role, within the Church of England recent

²¹⁰ Eddie Gibbs, *Followed or Pushed: Understanding and leading your church* (Bromley: MARC Europe, 1986). The chapter headings are indicative of the relationship that is to be achieved: 'Surveying the course', 'Studying the form', 'Taking up the Reins', 'Horses for courses', 'Getting into Shape', 'Leading the Field' and 'Staying in the Saddle.'

²¹¹ Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry*, vii.

²¹² Cameron, "Colleagues or Clients?," 116.

literature has concentrated on the role of lay and clergy working together in a church led mission and on the congregation as the locus of activity. It is as if the lay disciple has turned into the congregation member.

The remainder of this review of literature will, therefore, survey the areas in which congregations have been studied before concluding with proposals for future work.

4.2 The Study of Congregations²¹³

Congregations have been examined in three distinct fields: that explicitly called congregational studies, in work done on collaborative ministry and in the examination of 'ordinary theology.'²¹⁴ To place the study of congregations as the natural successor to a study of church and ministry is to claim for it a higher status than so far allowed. The study of theoretical ideas has long received greater regard than their application to practicalities, yet there can be no abstract

²¹³ It may be necessary to define the congregation which will be the subject of study. David H. Kelsey identifies the following characteristics:

A group of persons that gathers together to celebrate a universally practised worship of God,

This group explicitly does so "in Jesus' name" as a deliberate act of self identification,

This group does so regularly enough for an indefinite period of time to have a common life in which develop intrinsic patterns of conduct, outlook and story,

This group holds its conduct, outlook and story accountable as to its faithfulness to Biblical stories of Jesus mission and God's mission in Jesus.

"On the Christian Congregation," in Hough, Jr and Wheeler, *Beyond Clericalism*, 11-21.

²¹⁴ A phrase coined by Jeff Astley to describe the uninstructed theology of congregations. Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: looking, listening, and learning in theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

expression of Gospel truth.²¹⁵ Graham argues that the norms and values of practice give shape to a faith community and not the other way round. The primary mode of inquiry should, therefore be phenomenological.²¹⁶

4.2.1 Congregational studies

Although congregational studies has been well established overseas for several decades, with such works as Denham Grierson's *Transforming a People of God*, James Hopewell's *Congregation: Stories and Structures*, and the *Handbook for Congregational Studies*, edited by Carroll, Dudley, and Mckinney,²¹⁷ work on congregations in this country has been slower to emerge. A book of essays from the Centre of Exploration in Social Concern, an offshoot of the Grubb Institute, examined the difference between churches with a gathered congregation, resulting in an associational model of church with those whose foundation and focus was the local community.²¹⁸ It found significant differences in identity, mission and relation to other institutions.

A search of the literature on congregational studies, with further essays, was published in 2004²¹⁹ and a further substantial work published in 2005.²²⁰ The rate at which this discipline is now developing is demonstrated by these two works:

²¹⁵ Graham, *Transforming Practice*, 182: 'the truth of God language and faith claims is measured by the fulfilment of those claims in history by the actual creation of communities of peace, justice and equality.'

²¹⁶ Ibid., 205.

²¹⁷ Denham Grierson, *Transforming a People of God* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Education of Australia and New Zealand, 1984), James Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William Mckinney ed. *Handbook for Congregational Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987).

²¹⁸ Ecclestone, ed., *The Parish Church?* v.

²¹⁹ Mathew Guest, Karin Tusting, and Linda Woodhead, eds., *Congregational studies in the UK: Christianity in a post-Christian context* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 1-25.

²²⁰ Helen Cameron et al. eds., *Studying Local Churches, A Handbook* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 19-26.

the former alleges that there is a limited interest in church growth, or in the public work of the Church in Britain (in contrast to the States), while the latter book references *The Mission Shaped Church*²²¹ report of the Church of England and is concerned with the growth of churches.

Congregational studies uses both quantitative and qualitative methods.²²² Guest, Tusting and Woodhead,²²³ recognising an experimental feel to the discipline, acknowledge the range of disciplines which may be employed to examine the same phenomena: organisational studies, a sociological perspective, an ethnographic one and narrative theory.

Studying Local Churches contains anthropological, sociological, organizational and theological perspectives on each of four topics within congregational studies. Although the authors treat the four perspectives in a like manner, it is apparent that the anthropological and sociological approaches differ from each other in focus, while the organisational studies and theological strands do not appear to be separate methodologies, but different assumptive frameworks.

The authors then look at four perspectives; the global and the local context, the worship and action of a church, the resources and people of a local church, power in the local church and each is studied in the light of the four methodologies identified. What will be most illuminative for a study of clergy-lay relations?

The anthropological approach offers a framework for hearing the interpretation that people themselves make of their clergy. It will, Coleman claims, demonstrate the importance of history, story and memory, which are ways of linking a single local church to the global one.²²⁴ Listening to experience promises more fruitful

²²¹ Graham Cray, ed., *Mission Shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

²²² See discussion of methodology in Helen Cameron et al. eds., *Studying Local Churches*, 19-26.

²²³ Guest, Tusting, Woodhead, eds., *Congregational studies in the UK*, xiv.

²²⁴ Simon Coleman, "Perspectives on the Local Church: Anthropological Strand," in Cameron et al. eds., *Studying Local Churches*, 44-54.

results in investigating clergy-lay relationships than an ideological approach that describes how relations should be conducted.²²⁵

4.2.2 Ordinary Theology.

Astley's work on 'ordinary theology' may offer a way of listening to congregations' own theology of ministry and priesthood.²²⁶ Astley argues strongly for the value of listening to the voices of those without formal theological training, not only so as to know what is being received of the tradition, but as a valuable contribution to that tradition.²²⁷ Other attempts have been made to do this: for example, the 'Views from the Pews'²²⁸ collected in 1986, and contemporary research done in Birmingham in the 'God at Ground level' project.²²⁹ Astley has little to say about the methodology to be used: Miles' review of Astley's work highlights the need to use best social science practice in gathering data, advocating the use of discourse analysis,²³⁰ while Thomson challenges the researcher to abandon the 'objective vantage point' and engage with a congregation's 'theological phronesis.'²³¹

4.2.3 Collaborative Ministry

²²⁵ As examples of anthropological studies of congregations, see Timothy Jenkins, "Congregational Cultures and the Boundaries of Identity," in Guest, Tusting and Woodhead, eds., *Congregational Studies in the UK*, 113-123, Peter Collins, "Congregations, Narratives and Identity: A Quaker Case Study" in *Ibid.* 99-110, and David Clark, *Between Pulpit and Pew*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²²⁶ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 56: 'the theology and theologising of Christians who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic or systematic kind.'

²²⁷ An example is Ann Christie's study of 'Ordinary Christology:' Ann Christie, "Who do you say that I am?" *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 4.2 (2007): 181.

²²⁸ British Council of Churches, *Views from the Pews*.

²²⁹ Peter Cruchley-Jones, ed., *God at Ground Level: Reappraising church decline in the UK through the experience of grass roots communities and situations* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2008).

²³⁰ Rosie Miles, review of *Ordinary Theology*, in *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 1.2 (2004): 205-211.

²³¹ John Thomson, "Phronesis and Sophia: Church and Academy practising theology in concert?" *Journal of Adult Education* 1.2 (2004): 133-146.

Attempting to steer the Church towards a true collaboration between ordained and lay members, the importance of 'egalitarian working relationships' is emphasised by advocates of collaborative ministry.²³² Robin Greenwood has been at the forefront of work on a collaborative style of life and mission for local churches, building on his understanding of the social Trinity expounded by the Cappadocian theologians.²³³ In *Transforming Priesthood*, he identifies the need for an enabling role for the parish priest, overseeing the ministry of the whole church. He envisages a mutual contract between the ordained and the lay to identify expectations and to clarify roles.²³⁴ In *Practising Community: The Task of the Local Church* he locates healthy and holy relationships in the church as a living paradigm of the Gospel, while *Transforming Church; Liberating Structures for Ministry* argues for a release of all church members gifts. *Parish Priests* further examines the nature of the relationship between clergy and lay people within a collaborative understanding of leadership.

Stephen Pickard is newer to the British scene, but he uses the same metaphor as this literature review of a map to describe the necessity of examining a wide 'territory' before arriving at conclusions about the present situation.²³⁵ His attempt to ground a theory of collaborative ministry in dialogue with the science of emergence suffers from confusion about whether this is a metaphor

²³² e.g. George Lovell, head of Avec, a consultancy service for clergy and laity on community involvement. George Lovell, *Analysis and Design* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1994), 267-271.

²³³ Robin Greenwood, *Transforming Priesthood: A New Theology of Mission and Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1994).

_____, *Practising Community: The Task of the Local Church* (London: SPCK, 1996).

_____, *Transforming Church; Liberating Structures for Ministry* (London: SPCK, 2002).

_____, *Parish Priests: For the Sake of the Kingdom* (London: SPCK, 2009).

²³⁴ Greenwood, *Transforming Priesthood*, 157.

²³⁵ Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry*, 13.

or a literal description of the way the world is created.²³⁶ But the conclusion of his mapping the territory; that there is no satisfactory theological explanation of the relation between the ministries of the baptised and of bishops, priests and deacons that will facilitate good working relationships, confirms the findings of this review.

4.2.4 Case studies

In order to see how studies of congregations may be able to offer assistance in the examination of clergy-lay relationships I have looked at some particular studies, which employ these methodologies.

Writing from an organizational studies perspective Harris, studying the exercise of power, notes that that, while personality differences and poor communication are often blamed for conflict, it is more likely to be structural and cultural differences.

²³⁷ Clergy, for example, often work within authoritarian/traditional or charismatic authority structure, while lay people are working within a rational/legal one.²³⁸

Examining the ambiguous roles of ministers and the position of lay volunteers and paid staff, Harris concludes that conflict is rarely expressed about foundational vision, but about operational goals.²³⁹ 'Ministers themselves seem to be chronically discontented and lay people too appear to be generally unhappy about what ministers do or do not do'²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Ibid., 133-137. Greenwood's favourable review of Pickard: Greenwood, "The Priest as Collaborator" *The Church Times* (16 April 2010): 27, does not mention the use of this scientific theory.

²³⁷ Margaret Harris, "Power in the Local Church: Organizational Studies Strand," in Cameron et al. eds., *Studying Local Churches*, 209-221.

²³⁸ Ibid., 219. The distinctions are those of Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).

²³⁹ Margaret Harris, *Organizing God's Work, Challenges for Churches and Synagogues* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1988).

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 6, quoting Mary Anne Coate, *Clergy Stress, The Hidden Conflicts in Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1989).

The distinction noted by Cameron between colleagues and clients suggests an area of potential conflict when these perceptions clash.²⁴¹ Following study of 23 congregations in the US Becker concluded that most internal conflict was related to disharmony between types of congregational identity present in the same congregation.²⁴² Todd's research indicated that in the Bible-study groups he studied clerical views are always part of the interaction and conversation in a way which makes lay people's views both lay and clerical at the same time.²⁴³ Ellis argues that the priest *should* act as educator in the local setting but the pastoral mode has enjoyed a longer tenure, and might well conflict with that of teacher.²⁴⁴

These case studies indicate the potential for future study of congregations, both in method and content. The variety of methodological strands that have been identified must interact in order to do justice to the complexity of congregational life and these articles demonstrate the necessity of employing a framework, such as the pastoral cycle, to ensure that happens.²⁴⁵ The study of congregations is found to be the place of intersection of ecclesiology, the theology of priesthood and of lay discipleship and of phenomenological studies of the sociology and psychology of each. It is a young discipline and there is much uncharted territory.

4.3 The state of clergy-lay relations

Material on clergy-lay relations falls into three categories: that advocating good relationships for the sake of mission, that examining the nature of the church in

²⁴¹ Guest, Tusting and Woodhead eds., *Congregational Studies in the UK*, 139-152.

²⁴² P.E. Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural models of local religious life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Her four types are the 'House of Worship,' the 'Family,' the 'Community' and the 'Leader;' a mission focused, activist group.

²⁴³ Andrew Todd, "The Talk, Dynamics and Theological Practice of Bible Study Groups" (PhD thesis, School of Religious and Theological Studies, Cardiff University, 2009).

²⁴⁴ Kevin Ellis "The Priest as Theologian" in *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 1.2 (2004): 121-132.

²⁴⁵ Brynolf Lyon, "The relevance of congregational studies for pastoral theology," in Woodward and Pattison, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 257-271.

the light of the internal relationships of the Godhead, and that examining congregations in conflict. This review of literature has demonstrated that there is a paucity of material examining the existing state of affairs, not in a time of crisis, nor what ought to be the case. Proposals for future work will be discussed in the following section.

Part 5: Proposals for future work:

Following the direction indicated by the framework of PT, this literature review has mapped theological study of the church, priesthood and lay theology, and its interaction with the study of congregations and lay-clergy relationships. Study of Bob Lambourne's writing has provided comparison with the work of a pastoral theologian who has journeyed in the same territory.

This review of the literature has succeeded in showing the changing relationship between ecclesiology, priesthood and lay discipleship and the way in which each has affected perceptions of the other. I have not found this work duplicated elsewhere. It has become apparent that the Christian church, in the West at least, is now driven by a calling to carry out the mission of the Trinitarian God, and understanding of the roles of laity and priest have changed in the light of this. One effect of these theological and sociological developments is an increased interest in, and pressure upon, relationships within local congregations.

The study of Bob Lambourne's writing has demonstrated that he is a significant voice in these discussions, and contributes a focussed understanding of the church and the laity. His work demonstrates the feasibility of doing such study within the framework of PT. The weaknesses in his work, in Biblical and theological fields, have confirmed the necessity of serious attention to these areas. Surveying further work on clergy-lay relations within the fields of congregational studies, ordinary theology and collaborative ministry, both the

existence of reasons for clergy-lay conflict and the lack of research in this area have been identified.

A weakness of this review is its scanty treatment of the research of social scientists. This is largely because of the necessity of establishing a solid base of theological tradition with which to engage as a dialogue partner. I have also had difficulty in locating my present voice in this debate, at a time when there has been considerable turmoil in my family and professional life. My own perceptions of the church and the role of priests have been affected by the study I have carried out, but mature reflection awaits a more conducive stability.

Examination of the literature has proved to be a fruitful area of study and confirmed my sense that significant gaps existed within a topic of considerable interest. The review has identified the following unmapped territory:

The possibility of conflict between clergy and laity is everywhere hinted at, yet empirical study suggests this is not evidenced in serious conflict. Further work is necessary to identify whether this discrepancy is due to repressed conflict, church leavers, or new and satisfactory relationships between clergy and laity. A further possibility may be unwillingness to reveal this to a researcher: my own perception as a Diocesan training officer is that there is widespread dissatisfaction with clergy amongst many congregations. Even where relations are harmonious, clergy, particularly stipendiary clergy, are viewed as 'other.' It is also my expectation that an understanding of underlying theological assumptions will illuminate the relationships that exist at present. The study of theological tradition has indicated areas of potential conflict arising from difference in such assumptions, but my expectation is that these values are rarely openly shared.

Little work has been done on lay perceptions of the role and identity of priesthood. Since the vigorous protests of the 60s and 70s an explosion of new forms of authorised ministry has changed the landscape, but the changes this has made to the relationship between lay and ordained has not been charted. I have demonstrated that there is a particular need to listen to the voice of lay people in

these discussions, as their perceptions of the reality of the church and priests are matched with the rhetoric.

Though the congregation is now the locus of activity for a church led mission, there is little conversation between those concerned with mission-focussed action and those concerned with nurturing a healthy relationship between clergy and lay members. The congregation is now the place of heightened expectation and pressure and I wish to see whether this added burden can itself result in poor internal relations.

These unmapped areas indicate territory for further study, each of which requires an engagement with lived experience and attention to practice as well as to the theory which indwells those practices. This review has demonstrated that PT offers a framework for examination of experiences and perceptions, examined in the light of social science and theological tradition and in the light of this I propose to examine lay perceptions of the role of clergy in the light of the contemporary focus on mission, asking whether this is improving or resulting in a deterioration of relations between lay and ordained members of the church.

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Appendix Two - Publishable Article

“Monarch, Shepherd or Parent - what does the experience of interim ministry reveal about the theology and practice of full time incumbency in the Church of England?”

Abstract Interim Ministers, who nurture the health of congregations during a ministerial vacancy, have a privileged perspective on congregational life and the practice and theology of full time ordained leadership. In this paper the character of pastoral charge in the Church of England is examined and three theological models identified and contrasted. The author’s own experience of interim ministry is compared with the available literature and conversation with other practitioners in this country and in N America. These Interim Ministers claim that the relational nature of such leadership is congruent in each denomination, such that this examination of the practice and theology of the Church of England sheds light on the nature of all ministerial leadership.

Introduction

There is no shortage of work on the theology of ordained ministry and the practice of pastoral care, but the experience of interim ministry presents an opportunity to reflect on this subject from the congregations’ perspective and to observe the message given by those in positions of leadership. Though rooted firmly in the practice of the Church of England, I have also explored points of similarity and difference with other Christian denominations. The experience has demonstrated the perspective that may be gained by those in exceptional positions, such as short term appointments or placements, not only on the place they are situated, but also on the institution which carries out mainstream practice.

Intentional Interim Ministers are appointed to a church during the period between more permanent ministries, to guide it through the transitional process. Recognised as a distinctive category of ministry, Interim Ministers are

appointed in the churches of North America, in the Church of Scotland and in the English United Reformed Church. The literature arising from these churches suggests little variation in practice, regardless of differences in churchmanship and theology of ministry. My own recent experience of being attached to a parish in the Church of England as it awaited a longer term appointment led me to read the current literature from other denominations and provinces and to meet others engaged in interim ministry. At the same time I found an emerging interest in the subject amongst Church of England leaders who asked if such a ministry could have a valuable contribution at the time of their parishes' experience of transition. I found that, as well as discovering much about the practice of interim ministry, my own experience and that of others made apparent assumptions that exist at both local and diocesan level about the theology and practice of incumbency in the Church of England.²⁴⁶ Interim ministry, being on the edge of parish, chapter and diocese, is a privileged place. As an Interim Minister (IM) I was both an 'insider' and an 'outsider;' a participant observer immersed in and identifying with two churches, while retaining the distance that came from the shared knowledge that I was not there for the long term.

2.0 Methodology.

Throughout this period I have kept a journal, recording my activity, meetings and conversations, with the object of noting my own reactions to the role of the IM and comparing this experience with the literature and practice of

²⁴⁶ There is no one term to describe those with ministerial leadership and even within the Church of England this could be the incumbent, the team vicar, a priest in charge or resident minister. Literature from North America uses the term, 'settled pastor,' while I have referred to 'ordained leadership,' as well as to the more familiar terms of a vicar or an incumbency to describe this post. The discussion concerns those whose departure creates the 'vacancy;' this article is not about the nature of priesthood, but rather about a 'pastoral charge', the 'cure of souls.'

other churches. The journal has enabled transient observations and emotions to be recorded and proved to be an essential record of changes in opinion and understanding of events, so that I can now look back and test past experiences against present interpretation – and vice versa. I have surveyed the existing literature found in books and ministerial websites, and emailed and spoken with those engaged in interim ministry, so that my own experience of assisting two churches during their ministerial vacancy may now be compared with that of other churches who engage IMs.

While considering the ethical implications of this piece of work I have reflected on my position as a researching professional. Members of the congregation were informed that I was writing up the experience of being an IM but expressed greater anxiety about what might be reported to diocesan authorities than might be published for a wider audience. With unresolved doubts about the feasibility and ethics of researching a congregation for whom one also has pastoral responsibility, I decided that in this piece of work the object of the research was my own position and, consequently, that of those with ministerial leadership, not the congregation.

Within the broad field of practical theology two approaches have proved stimulating. One is ‘ordinary theology,’ the uninstructed theology of congregations.²⁴⁷ I have wanted to gain an insight into the belief structures of the congregation, and so have listened to their own view of ministry and priesthood through what has been said to me about my role, the practice of my predecessors and the expectations of my successor. While aware that I was being told only a small part of their story their words are significant as indicative of the role they wished to present. The second approach that has stimulated reflection is ‘implicit theology:’ an understanding of the “basic-

²⁴⁷ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening, and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p.56.

but-nascent” theological habits; language, culture, and liturgical practice, that make up the life of churches, congregations and denominations.²⁴⁸

Both these approaches may be included in the category of operant theology, distinguished from *normative theology*; the scriptures, creeds, official church teaching and the liturgies, *formal theology*; the work of theologians and dialogue with other disciplines, *espoused theology*; embedded within a group’s articulation of its beliefs and *operant theology*; embedded within the actual practices of a group.²⁴⁹ This analysis relates the conversation and practice of both congregation and leadership to other, more commonly recognized forms of theology and suggests how each interacts with the other. This article will examine the insights gained from interim ministry about the practice of incumbency and, in the light of them, explore three theological models. In the terms described above, the operant theology and espoused theology of incumbency will be examined.

3.0 What does the experience of Interim Ministry reveal about the practice of incumbency? a) The relationship with the Incumbent.

There is considerable agreement amongst denominations about when an IM should be appointed and each situation relates to the ending of the

²⁴⁸ Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church: The Promise of Implicit Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p.2.

²⁴⁹ Helen Cameron, et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action, Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), p.54.

relationship between the vicar and the congregation.²⁵⁰ Even though committed to the sharing of ministry amongst all church members, early in his research into congregational dynamics Mead found that the relationship between clergy and laity was deeply significant, regardless of denomination, size of church or other factors. A change of ministerial leadership would always have an unsettling effect.²⁵¹ Parochial ministry is a unique emotional system, and 'there is no bond quite like the bond which develops between people and pastor.'²⁵²

Priestly authority is shown to be a relational leadership, heavily dependent on the skill of the vicar for its maintenance. I was appointed to work in one church whose priest had retired after 12 years and in another where there had been a series of pastoral breakdowns. Though these were two very different situations, in both cases it was apparent that it was the relationship with the vicar(s) which defined the character of the church. This influence continued: they now either identified with those vicars or in distinction from them and drew attention to ways in which I was different. As a vicar leaves there is much to be done to prepare a congregation for a successful relationship with its next long term minister.

Rather than fearing that all will collapse during the vacancy and that the post should be filled as soon as possible, church leaders are encouraged by IMs

²⁵⁰ From the National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors' website: www.nalip.net/education.asp accessed 4th. February 2011, also The Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod, <http://interimministrylcms.org/> accessed 20th. December 2010 and that of the Presbyterian Church of the USA: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/ministers/interim-pastors> accessed 20th. December 2010.

²⁵¹ Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastors...and How it Affects Change in the Congregation* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2005), p.viii.

²⁵² Roger S. Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 1998), p.95.

to seize the moment when a congregation is open to change.²⁵³ As a ministerial vacancy begins there will often be grief, whether or not the pastor was 'successful,' and there may be conflict, low self esteem and financial challenges.²⁵⁴ Successful intervention in places where, because of the ending of a lengthy tenure, pastoral re-organisation, or death or misconduct, the transition is unlikely to be straightforward will bear much fruit in the future. The URC in this country, for example, routinely appoints an Interim Moderator who fulfils this role in addition to their continuing duties elsewhere, but a trained IM is appointed if there are to be major shifts in emphasis, after a long previous ministry, or a difficult end.²⁵⁵ Interim ministry slows down the appointment process, allowing the congregation time to make well-informed and deliberate decisions regarding the future course of the church; as in a time of bereavement and re-adjustment after individual loss, it is in-advisable for the church to act speedily.²⁵⁶

The tasks facing the IM will, therefore, be concerned with the legacy of the relationship between vicar and congregation. The Interim Ministry Network, advises that IMs should, first, enable the church to examine its history and come to terms with the past.²⁵⁷ I encouraged the congregation that mourned the loss of a well loved priest to recall the processes by which he was welcomed and introduced to the parish and so prompt thoughts about how to induct a newcomer. Second, the IM is to claim the *current* identity of the parish; recognising the gifts and vocation of that particular expression of Christian

²⁵³ Mead, *A Change of Pastors*, p.82.

²⁵⁴ Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds*, pp.14-25.

²⁵⁵ Fiona Thomas, Secretary for Education and Learning, URC Church, email message to author. 15th December 2010.

²⁵⁶ Molly Dale Smith, *Transitional Ministry: A Time of Opportunity* (New York: Church Publishing, 2009), p.4. This is in contrast to Jackson, who believes churches should aim to interview within 1 month of the previous Vicar leaving. Jackson, *Hope for the Church*, p.131.

²⁵⁷ Smith, *Transitional Ministry*, p.30. See also the website of the Interim Ministry Network: www.imn.org.uk accessed 14th. December 2010.

community. A third task is to encourage new leadership – while valuing the old. The former leadership may have worked well with the former pastor and it should not be assumed it will be the right personnel or structure for the vacancy.

b) The dynamics of change within a congregation during the transition from one leader to the next.

The experience of the Interim Ministry Network is that denominational structures influence appointments and the relationship between the congregation and the denominational authority, but that emotions, dynamics and the process of leadership are deeply congruent in each church during the period between settled pastors.²⁵⁸

Bridges distinguished between change; what happens, transition; the process of dealing with change, and transformation; the new shape which emerges after change.²⁵⁹ He emphasized the importance of good endings as the beginning of transition.²⁶⁰ The IM should, ideally, be appointed as soon as a vacancy is announced. How the time between the announcement of departure and actual leaving are spent will affect the ministry of the next pastor.²⁶¹ Present practice in the Church of England is to leave the process of departure in the hands of the individual minister to arrange – at a time when he or she may be least able to discern the best practice because of the emotional ties which are to be broken.²⁶² An embarrassment appears to surround the process. If the priest is

²⁵⁸ Smith, *Transitional Ministry*, p.viii.

²⁵⁹ William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing, 1995).

²⁶⁰ Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, p.23.

²⁶¹ Mead, *A Change of Pastors*, p.24.

²⁶² The Diocese of New York has lengthy guidance about what needs to be done at departure, <http://www.diocesenyc.org/pages/260-leavetaking-brochure> Accessed 12th. January 2011. A

moving to a more senior or obviously desirable post the congregation may feel gratified that they have been a launch-pad, but in other circumstances, even a retirement, the congregation appears puzzled. Comments to me such as “but we thought you liked it here,” and “what will you do without your friends (here) around you?” suggest that the post is not viewed as a place of work, but of relationships.²⁶³

I attempted to help each congregation understand the processes of transition and reassure them that feelings of loss, or anger, or disorientation, are normal. As an IM I could acknowledge these emotions and even stir them up in a way that both the departing minister who has occasioned them and the newly arrived minister would find uncomfortable. Stipendiary priests may be encouraged to avoid conflict by the ‘the norm of niceness.’²⁶⁴ Keeping everyone happy appears to be central to the vicar’s role.

The ‘neutral zone,’ the space between the ending and the new beginning is a time of anxiety, when former tensions may re-emerge.²⁶⁵ The departed vicar was probably the one with access to the largest number of people and sources of information and the church may have lost the main channel of communication and even the natural mediator.²⁶⁶ But the vacancy can also be a time of creative experimentation, as ideas are tested out without the need to

liturgy could be found in the Franciscan Prayer book *Celebrating Common Prayer* (London: Continuum, 1992).

²⁶³ Tony Bradley, *Understanding the Interregnum: Making Judgements when Kings Move* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1996), pp 8&9 lists reasons for a vacancy with the resulting questions asked in a congregation.

²⁶⁴ Sara Savage, “On the analyst’s couch: psychological perspectives on congregations and clergy,” in Steven Croft, ed. *The Future of the Parish System: Shaping the Church of England for the 21st Century* (London: CHP 2006) pp. 16-32, 23.

²⁶⁵ Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, p.35.

²⁶⁶ Mike Alexander and Jeremy Martineau, *So the Vicar’s Leaving: the Good Interregnum Guide* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, rev. ed. 2002), pp.8,10.

sustain them in the long term. My own experience suggests that some might feel it is disloyal to the previous priest to change much, in skills or their own self image, during this time, and need encouragement to own the changes that will happen regardless of their hesitations. The vacancy may make apparent the structures of leadership and decision making that have actually existed in the parish and, though appearing at first sight to be a clerical intervention, an IM may be best placed to promote lay ministry by widening participation and identifying fresh voices.²⁶⁷

The fact that the congregations were given no say in my appointment as their IM effectively accomplished a further task identified by the IM Network, to remind the local church of its link with the larger church.²⁶⁸ Shorter incumbencies and greater intervention by diocesan leaders mean that the vicar is less likely than in the past to be able to act as absolute monarch in his or her kingdom. Diocesan authorities often see the vicar as the link between them and the congregation, while distrust and even resentment of diocesan structures is sometimes encouraged by vicars to deflect criticism from themselves. The vicar may be in the ambiguous position of being treated as a go-between by diocesan authorities while acting as a buffer between the congregation and the diocese.

c) The congregation as the unit with which the vicar must work.

As well as marked differences in finance and denominational involvement, it is noteworthy that all the N. American literature deals with congregations, as do

²⁶⁷ The perspective of the United Church of Canada: www.united-church.ca/files/handbooks/interimministry.pdf accessed 1st.December 2010 This is the primary declared intention of the Vacancy Leadership Advisers appointed in Bristol Diocese 'to work alongside those in parishes to identify and develop potential local leaders.'
www.bristol.anglican.org/ministry/strategy/downloads/RTE%20Strategy%20Overview. accessed 3rd March 2011

²⁶⁸ Smith, Transitional Ministry, p.30.

the Church of Scotland and the URC. Each has a congregational focus, whereas the Church of England has appointed priests to the cure of souls of the geographical area of the parish. The appointment of IMs in some English dioceses, however, appears to be in response to increasing awareness of need to ensure the 'health' of congregations. This interest has arisen from a renewed mission perspective within the church, and awareness that the congregation is the living paradigm of the Gospel, giving it flesh and authenticity. Yet, as well as more demands and expectations on congregations that are often shrinking and financially stretched, diocesan leaders report a greater incidence of internal conflict, so that congregations need intervention before a new appointment is made.

It is arguable that, in a post- Christendom, missional church an increasing focus on church membership as the significant marker of religious affiliation is inevitable and that even the Church of England is becoming more congregation-focused. Tiller, a firm advocate of mission to the whole parish, asserted that a communal church approach to the neighbourhood could only be accomplished by an associational basis for membership.²⁶⁹ The need, highlighted by interim ministry, to concentrate on the health of a congregation may well indicate the priority for future vicars, who are, at present, often torn between the demands of the volunteers whose assistance they need and the requirements of Canon Law to meet the demands of all parishioners. Warmly welcomed by local schools and community groups, I realized how much they cared about the future ministry in the church, but despite the involvement of *parish* representatives, in practice it is the needs of the congregation which is represented at interview and parish institutions rarely have a part in the process of choosing a new vicar. The increasing power of the worshipping congregation, essential to the mission

²⁶⁹John Tiller, "The Associational Church and its Communal Mission," in Giles Ecclestone, ed. *The Parish Church? Explorations in the Relationship of the Church and the World* (Oxford: Mowbray 1988), pp.89 – 97.

of the church and whose giving finances the church, strongly indicates that the vicar will be accountable to them.

d) The direction in which the working conditions of incumbency are changing.

The literature on interim ministry stresses the importance of a letter of agreement between the IM and the local church, identifying the goals, tasks, roles and responsibilities of the IM, the length and terms of service and remuneration.²⁷⁰ The value of such clarification is recognised in the provisions of Common Tenure, which requires a statement of particulars for each office-holder.²⁷¹ The experience of IMs indicates that discussion about role and expectations, shared with as wide a body of people in the church as possible, is a considerable advantage. It might, however, be resisted by some vicars who wish to retain the freedom of an undefined position, or who are embarrassed to raise the issue of their own working conditions. I did not, however, have such an agreement and initial confusion in the parish over my title revealed how novel the idea of a short term appointment is. ‘Vicar’ is the term to describe all ordained ministers, whether by those in the church or outside of it and my attempts to qualify this with ‘short-term’ or ‘temporary’ did not stick. Perhaps it was seen as an oxymoron: within the Church of England both residency and stability in appointments of incumbents have (though only in recent centuries), become considered an essential feature of parish ministry.²⁷² As ordained ministry is re-imagined for the world after Christendom, the newly introduced ministry of IMs, who have no inherited authority, indicates the present necessity of clarification and justification of the role of ordained minister.

²⁷⁰ Ken Ornell and Molly Dale Smith, “Why have a letter of agreement?” in Smith, *Transitional Ministry*, pp.38 – 47.

²⁷¹ For details of Common Tenure, see www.common tenure.org accessed 2nd. February 2011

²⁷² See Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London: SPCK, 1980), for discussion of the development of the parish priest’s pattern of work.

The relationship between a role, established by a psychological contract and the status which legitimises that role is changing. Traditional authority has conveyed status, justified by the role carried out, but within an industrial and post-industrial society the diversity of roles which are needed for the effective functioning of society have taken precedence.²⁷³ Implicit ecclesial and familial relationships are giving way to explicit and contractual relationships, a radical change in understanding for both priest and congregation. Clarity in relationships may be a major factor in moving from parent-child relationship, with unwritten expectations and ill defined emotional contracts, to adult/adult relationships.²⁷⁴ But as I approached the end of an initial six month licence I found that the newly introduced provisions of Common Tenure prevented a further extension. Fixed term appointments are only allowed in exceptional and closely defined circumstances. There is no current definition of an interim minister and the flexibility which enables creative work to be done in a time of transition prevents the precise definition that would satisfy the legislation. It was decided to treat me as employed, with 'Permission to Officiate' in the parishes.

My own reaction was to feel de-motivated. No longer a licensed pastor with a mandate to assist change but, it seemed, simply plugging a gap, my perception of my role changed. My journal at this time records perplexity and the realization of the importance of a clear sense of identity for the practice of ministry. The relationship between the congregation and me now seemed to be a contractual one, more like a hireling than a true shepherd. Soon after this decision I was appointed to another post and I began the process of departure.

²⁷³ Avis discusses Weber's categories in Paul Avis, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (London: Mowbray 1992), p. 57.

²⁷⁴ Loren B. Mead, *Transforming Congregations for the Future* (Herndon, Virginia: Alban Institute Publications, 1994), p.100.

The introduction of Common Tenure, legally established working hours and holidays and other terms of service may create a working environment that more closely resembles that of the IM than of incumbents with freehold tenure of the benefice. The direction in which the practice of incumbency is moving is thus demonstrated by the experience of IM: the implications for the espoused theology of incumbency are discussed in the next section.

e) The complexity of the task facing ordained leaders.

The Interim Ministry Network was established in 1980 to bring together expertise and training resources for congregations in transition and those who work as IMs. It, along with the Intentional Growth Center in N Carolina and the Lutheran Church, make their training available to each of the Protestant denominations in N America. The IM must have a set of skills which come from experience in parochial ministry, speedily joining and connecting with the local Christian community. They must know how to help the congregation to focus on the future of the parish and encourage lay ownership of the church. They will also need some particular skills: problem solving, group facilitation, transition management, long and short-terms planning, stress management, community and team building and administration are all suggested!²⁷⁵ An understanding of family systems as it relates to congregations,²⁷⁶ use of the skill of appreciative enquiry²⁷⁷ and advanced pastoral skills are recommended. IMs may have to act as a kind of modern scapegoat, hearing and holding the painful past and carrying it away with them, but may also help congregations to realise what they

²⁷⁵ Smith, *Transitional Ministry*, pp.33,34 and the Interim Ministry Handbook of the United Church of Canada, <http://www.united-church.ca/files/handbooks/interimministry.pdf> accessed 14th. January 2011

²⁷⁶ David R. Sawyer, "The church in Transition as a Human System." In Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds*, pp.26-38. In this analysis, Sawyer views the church as a human system, held together by rules, roles and rituals.

²⁷⁷ Rob Voyle Smith, "What is the Appreciative Inquiry Approach to Transition?" in Smith, *Transitional Ministry*, pp.75-88.

really want and need.²⁷⁸ They will also, therefore, need to understand the causes of conflict in local churches and have the skills to make creative use of it.²⁷⁹ They need to be calm, objective, and trustworthy, experienced in parish ministry and able to manage themselves in a context of uncertainty.²⁸⁰ There are also, though, considerable rewards: I found satisfaction in working on a task for an identifiable period of time and I was also pleased to be able to suggest potential mission opportunities that were not restricted by my own abilities to accomplish them.

The final task of the IM, identified by the Network is to prepare to welcome the new incumbent. The care with which this process is described is an indication of the difficulties facing the new appointee. Mead challenges the view that there is any 'honeymoon period,' but states that the period after arrival is one of negotiation, during which both congregation and pastor must be ready for the hard work of confrontation and listening.²⁸¹ The first months, as a new relationship is established, are a time of anxiety and expectation.

This analysis of the complexity of working with a congregation is a reminder of the demands made of a vicar appointed on a longer timescale. Savage concluded that the benefits of the parish system are many, but that the burden of maintaining it falls on the vicar. Motivating the "settled blancmange"

²⁷⁸ Bonnie Bardot, "Coming to terms with history," in Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds*, pp.65-74.

²⁷⁹ Terry E. Foland, "Understanding Conflict and Power," in Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds*, pp.39- 51. Foland notes that churches commonly fight about the kinds of issues that IMs are appointed to address: identity, worship, role expectation of leaders, limited resources, and clergy misconduct.

²⁸⁰ Svingen, "The Interim Minister- A Special Calling," in Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds*, pp.56-62. See also The Intentional Growth Center, which trains Interim Ministers for the United Methodist Church, for personal characteristics of the IM <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e33sdk7mbda197be&llr=ozzg4xn6>

²⁸¹ Mead, *A Change of Pastors*, p.13.

that is the congregation and satisfying the expectations of the parish, clergy are stretched to breaking point.²⁸²

4.0 What does the experience of Interim Ministry reveal about the espoused theology of incumbency?

While there is an extensive literature on the theology of priesthood, little theological work has been done on incumbency.²⁸³ The experience of Interim Ministry, handling the transition between ordained leaders, enables examination of the implicit and espoused theology of pastoral charge.²⁸⁴ As shown above, it has made apparent the relational nature of ordained leadership, an emotional bond between incumbent and congregation. In my own search for identity as an IM I noted the de-motivating effect of the denial of a role, contradicting my self-image. Dulles believed that congregations need models of the church for their own self understanding.²⁸⁵ My own experience suggested that theological models are just as necessary for the self understanding and motivation of ministerial leadership. Priestly identity is shaped by the models which are presented by Scripture and the Church and it became apparent to me that several models of incumbency were operative; that of monarch, shepherd and head of the family. Each express a relational model of leadership, but with significantly different perspectives.

²⁸² Savage, "On the analyst's couch," pp. 16-32

²⁸³ Though, because of a confused conflation between the two, in another sense almost all of the literature on priesthood is about parish ministry.

²⁸⁴ For discussion of these terms see page 2 of this paper and Cameron et al. *Talking about God in Practice*, p. 54

²⁸⁵ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 2nd. edn.1988).

There is very little work on the biblical and theological basis for interim ministry.²⁸⁶ However weak in its own theology, though, IMs have insight into a rich vein of theological reflection on incumbency, since the present practice of the Church of England during ministerial vacancies is indicative of the theology of priesthood and of pastoral charge currently operating. The operant and espoused theological models of monarch, shepherd and head of family have powerful resonances, yet I have noted some dissonance between them.

The monarchical authority of the incumbent is made apparent at his or her departure. Responsibility for covering the needs of the parish for regular worship and pastoral contact thereafter is in the hands of the Churchwardens, though there may also be a considerable number of licensed and volunteer ministers. In the past Churchwardens have been instructed not to change anything. There is a conflict between the natural processes of transition and the position that, during an 'interregnum' it would not be right to alter what may then be changed by next incumbent who, holding the benefice by freehold, is believed to have sole authority. The ownership of the benefice is given to a new incumbent in a symbol-laden ceremony of institution. With echoes of a coronation, it is also a reminder of feudal character of the relationship of bishop and priest. Both personal anecdote, and the survey of Self Supporting Ministers records the number of assistant lay and ordained ministers who feel a significant loss of status at this point.²⁸⁷

The tenor of The Patronages (Benefices) Measure 1986 is to keep the vacancy as short as possible, requiring the parish to meet to decide on a number of crucial issues within four weeks of receiving the notice of vacancy from the Registrar. Though the description of the church's needs can be delayed over

²⁸⁶ Warren Schultz, "The Biblical and Theological Basis for Interim Ministry," in Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds*, pp.121-130.

²⁸⁷ Teresa Morgan, Survey of Self-Supporting Ministers, found at www.1pf.co.uk/SSM.html accessed 10th. April 2011.

several months, until it forms a satisfactory document for the statement of particulars, this may not give sufficient time for the church to identify its character and vocation apart from in partnership with the past minister.²⁸⁸ The haste to appoint an incumbent communicates the belief that the congregation are like a 'sheep without a shepherd' (Matt. 9. 36), a belief not displaced by the presence of other forms of both lay and ordained ministry. The reference to a 'ministerial vacancy' rather than an 'interregnum' marks a fall in popularity of the monarchical model as 'collaborative ministry' gains ascendancy, but practice demonstrates its persistent influence.

The image of a monarch is now unlikely to attract explicit support, but that of shepherd has been a guiding metaphor in devotional material and the ordinal. Nicholson's description of IMs as "temporary shepherds," focuses attention on the essential features of pastoral leadership. The book itself does not explore this title, but the words themselves evoke the rich biblical and liturgical roots of the image. The literature on interim ministry has made use of family system theory to analyse congregations. The family model also has biblical and liturgical roots, but I note some conflict with that of shepherd and flock.

The image of shepherd occurs many times in the Bible, with a consistent message. The people of God are God's flock (e.g. Ps. 100.2), and they need a shepherd. While the majority of references are to God as the shepherd, human rulers may also be given this role and act as his deputy: Joshua, (Num. 27. 17), David, (2 Sam. 2; 1 Chron. 11. 12; Ps. 78; 71) other tribal leaders, (2 Sam. 7. 7) and even a foreigner, Cyrus (Is. 44. 28). Some rulers abused the people and acted as false shepherds: (Ezek. 34.8) Such shepherds would defend the flock – against attacks by God himself. (Jer. 49.19; 50. 44; 51.23). God will replace them

²⁸⁸ The way to circumvent this is to treat each vacancy as an opportunity for pastoral re-organisation:
<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/ministry/strategy/downloads/RTE%20Strategy%20Overview.pdf>
accessed 20th. March 2011

(Ezek. 34.16) and also send the coming Messiah to act as the true shepherd: (Is. 40.11). Thus Jesus' announcement of himself as the Good Shepherd was seen as a messianic claim (Jn.10.10).

The action of God as shepherd is to provide for all the needs, both material and spiritual of the flock: (Ps. 23). The good shepherd is known to the people, and knows them intimately. The good shepherd is completely committed to the flock and will give his life for the sheep, defending them and seeking out the lost: (Lk.15. 3-7)

Christ is recorded as handing this commission to be the shepherd of the flock to Peter: (Jn. 21. 15-19), though Paul, in his final address, exhorts all leaders of the new Christian congregations to be worthy of their calling to be shepherds (Acts 20. 28). But ultimate authority remains with God, who will rule/shepherd his people with an iron rod. (Rev.2.27)

There is thus good Biblical precedent for describing the leadership of the Christian community in these terms though it is an image more used by those writing about the practicalities of ministry; the 'pastoral' ministry, than by works on the theology of ordination. It is, however, powerfully present in the ordinal. In the Book of Common Prayer, deacons are "to search for the sick, poor and impotent people of the parish."²⁸⁹ Searching for the lost may be an echo of the parable of the Lost Sheep (Lk. 15) and the sheep who are scattered without a shepherd (1 Kgs. 22.17 and Matt. 9.36). The reference is more explicit in the ordination of priests, where the two set Gospel readings are from Jn. 10 and Matt.9. 36. The Bishop charges the priests to "seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad" as "they are the sheep of Christ, which he brought with his death." Both the collect and the readings at the consecration of Bishops refer to the charge to the apostle Peter to care for God's flock: "Be to the flock of Christ

²⁸⁹ The Book of Common Prayer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

a shepherd, not a wolf: feed them, devour them not... that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear you may receive the never fading crown of glory.”

In Common Worship²⁹⁰ the deacon’s work is pastoral: “searching out the poor and weak, the sick and lonely and those who are oppressed and powerless.” Priests, in addition, are “called to be servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent.they are to teach and to admonish, to feed and provide for his family, to search for his children in the wilderness of this world’s temptations.” Thus the initiation services communicate the message that the minister is to act as a shepherd, leading out the flock, finding food, protecting from harm, seeking out strays and leading back to the fold for a safe night. The image of shepherd offers plenty to affirm the vicar who is God’s deputy and marks a radical distinction from those who are led, i.e. sheep, a different species with whom no personal relationships should be envisaged. Further, the implication of this model appears to be that the church is static: the role of a real Middle Eastern shepherd in leading the flock away from former, spent, fields has been forgotten. The biblical model has become adapted to a warm, damp climate; IMs as ‘temporary shepherds’ pick up this aspect of the original model as they attempt to lead a congregation to new pastures.

Although there is plenty written, for lay and ordained pastors on what it means to be a shepherd, I have found no contemporary reflection on what it means to be part of a flock. It may, indeed seem rather derogatory to be described as ‘sheep.’ Being part of a new family, especially in a world in which other relationships are fragmenting, appears much more attractive.

Many of the Biblical stories are tales of family life, but they are usually of dysfunctional families, whether the Patriarchs, the Kings or Jesus’ own family which he turned away (Mk.3. 31-35). Jesus inaugurated a new

²⁹⁰ The Ordinal of Common Worship was published in 2006 and is available at <http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/ordinal.aspx> Accessed 4th. January 2011

family, no longer dependent on ethnic ties (Mt.3.9) but on welcome to the new household of faith (Eph.2. 19). This is the family which calls God its Father and in which each are equal as brothers and sisters, adopted children and joint heirs with Christ (Rom.8. 16,17).

The words of welcome spoken at the service of Baptism are a reminder that “we are children of the same heavenly Father.” This usage is also present in the funeral service (to the confusion of many of the bereaved party) as the deceased is referred to as everyone’s brother or sister. A family is what a local church aspires to be. The former popularity of ‘Family Services,’ frequent reference to the local church as a family and the habit of some parts of the Church of England of calling the priest ‘Father,’ and even, sometimes, ‘Mother,’ all contribute to the strength of this metaphor in minds and hearts.

Family System theory understands families as emotional systems impacted by the level of anxiety within the system and level of differentiation between members.²⁹¹ A change in one person’s functioning is predictably followed by changes in other members. The theory is now widely applied to organizations, wherever there are strong supportive, long term roles and relationships, resulting in a degree of interdependence. And this is what many churches understand by the phrase; “We are the Body of Christ.” While denominational reviews of interim ministry have been largely appreciative,²⁹² Floyd observed that the family system model, used by IMs to analyse congregations, assumes dysfunctional relationships, involving co-dependency

²⁹¹ Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford, 1985), also Sawyer, “The church in Transition as a Human System.” 26-38.

²⁹² From, for example, the Presbyterian Church of Canada: “A Study of the Effectiveness of Interim Pastors” <http://www.pcusa.org/research/interimpastors.pdf>. The Association of Presbyterian Interim Pastors’ review is at <http://www.apims.org/SURVEY+SUMMARY/default.aspx> Accessed 4th. January 2011

and conflict and trauma occasioned by the departure of the leader.²⁹³ The message given, he claims is that settled pastors are harmful to congregations and this creates the very situation it purports to solve. But families may be healthy – and church families healthier than the blood relationships they replace.²⁹⁴ There may be a quality of ‘authentic relationship’ that enables nurture, service and growth.²⁹⁵

As I have listened to conversations about present and past experience of ordained leadership I have heard a diversity of emotions: tales of gratitude, of resentment and of suspicion. It has been particularly illuminating to listen to the mixed messages about the future. The incoming Team Vicar must both ‘mix in,’ ‘not come with an agenda’ and ‘take a lead,’ ‘be our guide.’ Coming from sources otherwise in agreement with each other, these have sounded more like the ambivalence surrounding parental influence expressed by growing children than a conflict in ecclesiological understanding. Hearing hesitations about visiting clergy who might insist on their own way and jealous guarding of ‘lay-led’ activities, I can see how discussions about the nature of leadership that is required in a congregation could as well be expressed as a discussion about parenting styles. The family model, while being at first more attractive than the pastoral, might also encourage the intense emotional relationships found in family life. While there is warmth and support, dirty linen is washed within what appears to be the privacy of family life.

Each model has, then its implications for the operation of leadership and for relationships within the congregation. The experience of interim ministry has highlighted some of the limitations of the pastoral model when it is used to

²⁹³ <http://richardlfloyd.blogspot.com/2010/08/ten-theses-about-interim-ministry.html>
Accessed 3rd January 2011

²⁹⁴ At www.churchleadership.com Accessed 1st. May 2011

²⁹⁵ Mead, A Change of Pastors, p.13.

describe a settled, indeed, lifelong, ministry of care, protection and nurture which in recent centuries have been marked by residency and permanence. But the pastoral image for leadership as it is currently understood is deficient chiefly because it is not shared with the congregation. Interim ministry, which has made a close study of congregational life, has observed that the favoured image is of the family. It is relationships within the family of the church, not with the parochial flock, that the Vicar must learn to create and sustain. It is family relationships, modelled on contemporary experiences of Western nuclear families rather than the radical new household of faith, that create the intensity of fellowship and conflict experienced in church life and magnified during ministerial vacancies. This trauma is not so surprising if congregational dynamics are seen in terms of family relationships and it is the departure of the head of the family, who is the ordained leader, which causes so much disruption. While a flock, after a period of uncertainty, might receive a new shepherd, a relationship with a new parent is fraught with anxiety.

Two theological models of church life, that of family and of flock, have entered the imagination, but in unequal measure amongst clergy and lay. While some priests may think of themselves as 'Father' to their parish, this paternal image is not contained in the liturgy of ordination and largely dropped from devotional works for clergy. As shown above, amongst clergy the role of a shepherd is preferred. The model of family life, however is alive and strong and has considerable effect in congregational life. The two models are not incompatible, but there is potential for misunderstanding between clergy and lay people when there is not a shared language about roles and expectations. There is an even greater danger that full time incumbents may imagine that they are entering a world in which role descriptions, working time agreements and all the ramifications of Common Tenure will shape their ministry. The image of family may not be incompatible with that of shepherd, but it certainly jars with the rational, bureaucratic world of Common Tenure. The introduction of Common Tenure

may well correct some of the abuses of the former arrangements, indeed it seems designed to regulate the ill defined expectations and open ended working commitments of traditional models. But it is a contractual relationship which fails to appreciate the emotional bond which develops between vicar and congregation, a bond made most apparent at the time of its rupture.

5.0 Conclusions

The experience of interim ministry has revealed much about the theology and practice of full time incumbency in the Church of England. I recognize that the narrow range of my experience invalidates broad conclusions, yet it has not contradicted the insights of other Interim Ministers in this country and abroad. Much has been asserted about the practice of incumbency. Congregations will experience some degree of trauma at the end of a relationship with their ordained leadership, regardless of church tradition and even of the 'success' or otherwise of the ministry. This is because of the intense nature of that relationship: emotional, standing between the local church and the diocese and, increasingly focused on the relationship with the congregation, rather than the parish. Interim Ministry has recognized the complexity of the task of ordained leadership and provided training for it; incumbents may still be working in traditional or charismatic modes of authority, while Interim Ministry has indicated the future expectation of a rational-legal framework. The theology of incumbency, held in the practice of congregations and diocesan authorities, is seen to be multifaceted. Theological models of monarchy, shepherding and family headship are co-existing, perhaps because they are not defined. In contrast, and perhaps in conflict, Common Tenure is a clear expression of role and expectation. The practice and theology of incumbency is, like a church in vacancy, itself in transition.

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Appendix Three

Information sheets and consent forms.

Participant Information sheet to be sent to local leadership group

Your participation is requested in research carried out for a professional doctorate in practical theology. The purpose of this study is to examine how the period immediately before the arrival of a new minister and the months after licensing can be best used as a to develop the relationship between priest and congregation

You have been chosen because your church has appointed a new Vicar, who will be arriving on... His/her responsibilities will not be exactly the same as your previous Vicar and so a re-negotiation of the role will be necessary.

You do not have to participate, but if you do I will meet with you before the date of licensing to hear your hopes, fears and expectations for the future. We will then agree what you want communicated to the Vicar. I will be meeting with him/her and asking similar questions. Again, I will ask what it is that they would like to communicate to the leadership in the church. In each case, nothing will be said without agreement. After the date of licensing there will be a meeting of the leadership group with the Vicar to share these hopes, fears and expectations and to frame understanding of the roles of the Vicar and of the local leadership.

With your permission the meetings will be audio-taped, but this will be for the purposes of research, not to be communicated unless agreement has been reached. The tapes, and any notes made, will stored by Anglia Ruskin University.

The benefit of participation is the opportunity to contribute to research that will develop good foundations for the relationship between Vicar and local

leadership. In your own situation, you will be able to participate in planning for the future as the shape of ministerial leadership changes.

There may be some risk that, in the course of discussion, matters come to light that were not clear at the time of appointment. If required, assistance will be provided by the Archdeacon and the Parish Development Adviser.

If you have cause to complain about the activity of the Lay Development Adviser, Rev Elizabeth Jordan, please contact Bishop John Wraw, the Bishop of Bradwell. If your complaint is about the process of research, please contact Anglia Ruskin University, through Ms Zoe Bennett, whose address is below.

Notes made on the outcome of these meetings will be written up by Elizabeth Jordan and submitted as a thesis for her Professional Doctorate. All names and places will be changed in order to preserve anonymity.

For further information about this research, please contact:

Rev Elizabeth Jordan,	Ms Zoe Bennett
The Diocesan Office,	Anglia Ruskin University
53, New St,	East Road, Cambridge.
Chelmsford, CM1 1AT	CB1 1PT

Participant Information sheet to be sent to priest

The purpose of this study is to examine how the period immediately before the arrival of a new minister and the months after licensing can be best used as a to develop the relationship between priest and congregation

You have been chosen because you have recently been appointed to ... Your responsibilities will not be exactly the same as that of your predecessor and so a re-negotiation of the role will be necessary.

You do not have to participate, but if you do I will meet with you before the date of licensing to hear your hopes, fears and expectations for the future. We will then agree what you want communicated to churches' leadership. I will be meeting with them and asking similar questions. Again, I will ask what it is that they would like to communicate to you. In each case, nothing will be said without agreement. After the date of licensing there will be a meeting between you and the leadership group to share these hopes, fears and expectations and to frame understanding of the roles of the Vicar and of the local leadership.

With your permission the meetings will be audio-taped, but this will be for the purposes of research, not to be communicated unless agreement has been reached. The tapes, and any notes made, will stored by Anglia Ruskin University.

The benefit of participation is the opportunity to contribute to research that will develop good foundations for the relationship between priest and local leadership. In your own situation, you will be able to participate in planning for the future as the shape of ministerial leadership changes.

There may be some risk that, in the course of discussion, matters come to light that were not clear at the time of appointment. If required, assistance will be provided by the Archdeacon and the Parish Development Adviser.

If you have cause to complain about the activity of the Lay Development Adviser, Rev Elizabeth Jordan, please contact Bishop John Wraw, the Bishop of

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Rev Elizabeth Jordan,	Ms Zoe Bennett
The Diocesan Office,	Anglia Ruskin University
53, New St,	East Road, Cambridge.
Chelmsford, CM1 1AT	CB1 1PT

Consent form

Title of project Developing relationships between clergy and lay leadership

Name of researcher Elizabeth Jordan

Please initial box

I confirm I have read and understood the participant

Information sheet, dated..... for the above

Study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and

That I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving

any reason and without disadvantage to myself or others.

I agree to take part in the above study

.....

.....

.....

name of participant

date

signature

.....

.....

.....

name of person taking consent

date

signature

(if different to researcher)

.....

.....

.....

Name of researcher

date

signature

Appendix Four

Collegial Theological Reflection

The paper distributed to theological reflectors prior to meetings in August 2014, and notes of subsequent discussion.

As a piece of practical theology I have been asking "how can the period immediately before the arrival of a new minister and the first six weeks after the licensing service be best used as a significant moment to develop the relationship between minister and congregation?"

This had, at first, seemed to me to be an investigation of relationships between laity and clergy. I am now working with a different framework, seeing this moment in the life of the church as one in which a local congregation, as a family system, adjusts to the arrival of a new and significant, member.

The theoretical framework for the research has integrated a theology of the communal self, grounded in the Trinity, the language of family systems, and my own experience.

A few specific questions for you to consider are at the end of the paper.

Description of church visits:

The leadership of six local churches were approached to take part in this research. These had been identified by the respective Area Bishop; chosen because they were at the end of a ministerial vacancy, rather than any selection based on age, gender or other characteristics of the participants, or the church. The research began in the period after an appointment had been announced, before the licensing service.

A meeting was arranged with the leadership of each church, which was some combination of PCC, Wardens and licensed ministers or local leadership team. Future hopes and expectations were discussed, the aim being to encourage a conversation between the participants, rather than responses directed solely to me. I asked what had been easy and what had been contested during the process of drawing up the application paperwork, and what had been the most significant qualities desired in the new priest. If not previously referred to I introduced the idea of the local church as a family, and asked what role they would like their new priest to take. The newly appointed priest, at a separate meeting, was also encouraged to reflect on the appointment and hopes for the future. We talked together about their understanding of ordained leadership. No attempt was made to hold one meeting prior to the other. Within six weeks of the licensing of a new Vicar a meeting with both parties together was arranged to share those things that had been agreed and reflect on the direction of future discussions. A further meeting was held, or a telephone conversation made, with the newly appointed Vicar within six months to evaluate, from their point of view, the effect of the process.

What does theology tell us about the local church?

Study of ecclesiology demonstrates the extent to which theologians have drawn from a wide variety of sources of authority in order to examine the nature of the Church. Elements within the Church of England have looked to the Bible, the Early Church, the Orthodox tradition and modern and traditionalist Roman Catholic theologians

Anglican ecclesiology also roots the purpose of the Church in its local manifestation, in the parish system which is the primary structure of the Church of England. Though resistant to a congregational understanding of church, the local congregation has assumed heightened importance as the Church in the West enters a missionary phase. It is here that growth in numbers, spirituality and service must take place. The 'health' of the local congregation has been keenly examined.

Recent ecclesiological work linking the nature of the church to the nature of the Trinitarian Godhead, has also concentrated attention on relationships within the church membership. Attention to the life of the Trinity has proved to be the most fruitful area of theology in the development of an ecclesiology which can dialogue with those social sciences which examine humans in community.

The desire of the Cappadocian Fathers, [Basil the Great](#) (330-379), [Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa](#) (c.332-395), and [Gregory of Nazianzus](#) (329-389), was to understand the Trinity in terms of the ways in which the Persons of the Godhead relate to each other, rather than by their distinguishing properties. The chief consequence of asserting God is three persons in relation is to say God is essentially relational, therefore a relational content is built into the notion of being. The world is not structured around logic, as Platonists and neo-Platonists held, but relation. The persons of the Godhead cannot be known except in the varied ways they interact with each other; their character is delineated by the relationship of mutual love and self- giving that they have. The invitation to humans to join in the movement of divine love comes from God and is made possible by God. This is a relational epistemology, participating in the life of God through prayer, service and membership of a Christian fellowship, and so knowing God as loving, forgiving and life enhancing . Neither the doctrine nor the experience has priority; the decision to participate precedes both.

The assertion of the Cappadocian Fathers that the relationship one has with God leads to a relationship with others also has epistemological consequences. If, in the words of Zizioulas, "to be and to be in relation becomes identical," relationship is itself a way of knowing (1985, p.88). There is no knowledge of the being of God, of ourselves or of each other as isolated individuals, to be acquired from objective observation.

This perception that relationships within the Trinity are indicative of ideal relationships within the Church has been influential in recent thinking about

the development of local congregations. It is here, Zizioulas writes, that a new ontology is experienced. "We cannot expect of the Church anything less than a sign and a reflection of God's way of being in creation" (1991, p.28). Just as the persons of the Godhead are known in their interaction, the offices of the Church are constituted by their relationship with the whole congregation. Bishop, priest and deacon are not, therefore, independent offices, but make sense only in interdependence in the community (Zizioulas, 1985, pp. 221-222). Each is a relational term, comparable to that of sibling, so that the ontological change effected at ordination is a change in relationship, not a change in an individual's being unrelated to those with whom the priest lives and works.

Greenwood has developed the work of Zizioulas for the English situation, and examined the role of the priest in relation to the local church community by building on his understanding of the essentially relational nature of the Godhead (2009, pp.10-17). He notes the importance of basing understanding of the ministerial priesthood in a Trinitarian rather than Christological discourse (1994, p.87). Ministerial orders based on the model of the Good Shepherd, (John 10: 10) or the imitation of Christ tend towards individualism, he claims, while those grounded in Trinitarian theology emphasise relationship amongst the Christian community. Such an understanding of the Trinity also supports a theology of the 'communal self,' each person constituted by their relationship to each other, rather than by their individual personalities. Within this understanding both leadership and priesthood are constructed in the relationships within local churches, not ontological realities.

It should be noted that 'theology' is here interpreted to include not only the primary texts and works of written theology, but also the thoughts, words and actions of members of Christian congregations. An expanded understanding of the nature of theology in recent years, including the use of the learning cycle by Green (2010), the exploration of 'Ordinary Theology' by Astley (2002), and of Implicit Theology by Percy (2010) has enabled consideration of theology that is spoken and enacted. The relationship between these various 'voices' of

theology is well expressed by Cameron, Bhatti and Duce (2010) who describe the 'normative' voice as the theological canon, the formal theological voice as those who have studied and written about that tradition, while the 'espoused' [theology](#) explores what the group says they believe and the 'operant' [theology](#) asks what the practices of this community disclose about its lived theological practice. Examination of espoused and operant theology will draw heavily on the research methods of social science.

What does sociology tell us about the local church?

The Church is, as Schillebeeckx described it (1990), one reality in two languages, just as Christ has two natures, human and divine, and the flawed human part is clearly as open to examination by social sciences as the practices of any other human community. Scripture, the traditions of the Early Church and theologians of past and present will not be sufficient to study the nature of a local congregation. The local congregation is, therefore, both a social and a theological entity, characterised by the celebration of the Eucharist, with a missionary task and an identity which is not fixed, but may respond to the contemporary society in which it is situated. The perspectives of theology and sociology are both needed, interacting with each other.

In order to understand congregations better it is especially appropriate to explore how humans relate to each other; what occurs between people, rather than what occurs inside them. Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory presumes that a system's objects and attributes can only be understood as part of the system and the character of the whole transcends the sum of its components. Family Systems Theory has been identified as a sociological perspective through which to view congregations, while acknowledging that this is a pragmatic choice. This theory, which examines the relationships between family members rather than their individual characteristics, has been applied through the work of Friedman (1985) to the life of congregations.

Identification of the congregation as a family is also based on a compound of Biblical and theological undergirding, observation and anecdote. The former popularity of 'Family Services,' frequent reference to the local church as a family, the habit of some parts of the Church of England of calling the priest 'Father,' and even, sometimes, 'Mother;' all contribute to the strength of this metaphor in minds and hearts. There is strong support for this image in the Bible: for example, believers are "worshipping one heavenly Father, and sharing the inheritance of God's Son, Jesus Christ. (John. 1: 12). It appears that a family is what a local church aspires to be.

It is also apparent that an extended family can share some of the relationship with space and time that a congregation does. Absent family members are deemed to be present in the communal emotional life. Past family members can have a great influence on present ones, while the birth of children is celebrated as the continuance of 'the family line.' Because of these similarities, closer examination of extended families may shed light on the nature of relationships in congregations. The congregation also has a distinctive relationship to space and time, place and history, through which it self-identifies. In the Eucharist the past death of Christ is remembered and the future heavenly banquet enacted. The congregation is united in communion with the saints of the past and anticipates the final gathering of all God's people: "gather into one in your kingdom all who share this one bread and one cup, so that we, in the company of all the saints, may praise and glorify you forever" (Common Worship, Eucharistic Prayer A. p. 190). This existence in time and space is realised in the practices of the congregation as well, as candles are lit in remembrance, intercessions are made for those absent because of illness or distance and prayers for the future are made.

Family Systems theory itself has not been evidenced through research; it is a pragmatic approach to family breakdown. The Network of Interim Ministers, consultants from the Alban Institute and the Bridgebuilders organisation have all made extensive use of Family therapy in their work with congregation

members and leaders though without further research into the effectiveness of this. In the visits to local churches models of ordained leadership which mirror family relationships were identified and the way in which congregation members construct the meaning of those relationships were examined.

What have visits to churches demonstrated?

The analysis of the meetings:

The first question to both the group of church leaders and to the priest was to ask them what had gone well - and not so well, in the interview process and the licensing service. This was intended to be an easy opening question. It proved to be a topic on which the participants were more than ready to talk and, indeed, on a couple of occasions discussion had to be curtailed. The willingness of participants to tell their collective stories affirmed the significance of such narratives and suggested the use of narrative inquiry in analysis of this part of the meeting. I particularly looked the roles ascribed between lay and ordained members of the church. The transcripts were examined for examples of stories and language which described those roles.

Following the narrative of the appointment process, the remainder of the meetings were comprised of shorter responses during semi structured conversations. The framework of questions and topics to be raised was supplemented by the participants' own agendas. Adjacency pairs are the habitual sequences and common responses that make conversation flow, and demonstrate that one has understood the preceding turn of the speaker, and so indicate the quality of relationship with that person. Noting these pairs enabled assessment of the participant's understanding of the topics which were introduced and their understanding of each other's position. Association of ideas and *non sequiturs* were equally of interest.

The second way in which the techniques of conversation analysis were used was in observation of the subject of each speech, an element of the syntax of the conversation. The choice of first, second or third person may, of course, be

the result of unconscious habit, but may also indicate a sense of agency or passivity in the process of making decisions about a new priest. I noted the extent to which the lay leadership expressed a belief that they were able to influence the appointment of an ordained minister, comparing this usage with that indicating a lack of agency. The newly ordained minister's choice of subject was also noted and then examined to see whether, in context, it represented a sense of individual responsibility, (first person), reliance on the external authority of the diocese, (third person) or a developing sense of identity with the congregation and local leadership, (first person, plural).

Thus each of the meetings held contained a mixture of narrative and conversation. As well as methods of narrative analysis and conversation analysis the transcripts were also examined for the occurrence of key concepts from the theoretical framework. Family Systems was introduced at the meetings prior to licensing and inquiry made about how it had been applied to the particular congregation. Reactions to this were a significant part of the later conversation. The theology of a communal self was not explicitly introduced, but the transcripts examined to see whether this understanding of the life of a congregation was one that was already present.

Outline 'findings' from research.

Transforming Presence has focussed attention on why a priest is needed:

It might be expected that churches should have thought about what they wanted in an ordained leader at the time of a new appointment, but I noted that much discussion about what was desirable was expressed in terms of the distinctive features of *priestly* ministry. Given the wide variety of churches represented, there was surprising agreement about the *spiritual* leadership that was required. For the congregation this meant someone who could lead worship, especially innovations in worship, to be the one who knew about the Bible and theology ('priest-speak') and the one who could minister to the dying and the bereaved. This last role was not expressed as a sacramental, rather

than pastoral one. Pastoral care and follow up are also needed, and they could be the priest who co-ordinated them, but they could also be shared with the laity. The priest should also be the visible sign of the churches' presence, representing the church in the community. They were a symbol of the church's presence, since even those congregations with very active lay members knew that the surrounding community interpreted a dog collar as 'the Church.' This was echoed in those priests who had recently been curates who spoke of the difference as one of responsibility and realising that they held the vision and identity of the church. Most priests expressed their understanding of leadership in less sacramental terms, talking more in terms of the changes they would bring to the church.

The elevated status of priests in the past was firmly rejected but both lay and ordained leaders.

Family language is widely used

I found that the language of family was widely used amongst the lay leaders I met. It was used freely in situations where the support of the birth family is a significant indicator of flourishing and even survival. It was also intentionally used in places where members of the congregation had deliberately sought out older members of so that their children, who lived far from their own extended family could adopt substitute grandparents and aunts and uncles. Many people were aware of the complexity and possible pain of family language, but still felt it was a non negotiable description of the congregation. In some cases the interconnection between the family of the church, the natural nuclear family and relations in the local community were intertwined.

Turning away from the elevated status that priests had enjoyed in the past also meant, for most lay leaders and priests, a rejection of the title of 'Father.'

'Parental' was paired with keeping or being dependent, being distant or wanting to keep control and was not popular. Even church where it was natural to speak of the priest as a spiritual father there was explicit rejection of the

idea that 'Father knows best.' The descriptions that were preferred were an elder brother, elder sister, a favourite aunt, always based on personal experience of good relationship with a real person in that role. There was common agreement that it was much easier to discuss styles of leadership in these terms than in abstract terms such as 'facilitative' or 'collaborative.'

Speaking to the newly appointed priests, it was clear they were each considering the role they would adopt in this new situation. Those moving from a curacy to a position of pastoral charge were particularly aware of the need to change their approach. Most drew on previous experience, sometimes from their family position, but also from their previous work experience. They were not as wedded to the idea of the local congregation as a family as the lay leaders were. Some priests able to choose another role when one proved untenable and one priest of long standing described how he had adopted a variety of familial and non familial roles, depending on his perception of need. He thought that the church could be a "substitute family" and was, truly one baptised family with one Heavenly Father, but that language should not be allowed to get in the way of spiritual growth.

Two other priests who were averse to using family language of the church were divorcees. One acknowledged the congregation's 'emotional radar', believing that his relationship with his second spouse had to be good for the sake of his effective leadership and the health of relationships in the congregation. This second point was supported by those two sets of parish reps who were frustrated by how little they could find out about the new appointee's spouse, as they highly valued the marriage relationship and had noted the unease caused by having a minister whose marriage relationship was not good. One group of wardens said they were well aware of the strains on children of being brought up in a vicarage, but were adamant that the minister's wife would contribute, positively or negatively to the family atmosphere in church.

The second priest who was averse to family language thought the language of friendship was greatly preferable. This, though language that Jesus used, did

not have the same theological and traditional resonance as family and was not picked up by the others present. On this occasion, and at another church, the priest chided those present for using family language, but the lay leaders continued to do so.

Some other models of leadership were suggested, both by lay and ordained leaders. These models came from business, both self employed and as a consultant, from school, from sports and from medicine. The gendered nature of some traditional images, especially that of shepherd, was noted.

The impression was that the appointment of a new priest was the beginning of a new relationship in which people are investing a large amount of personal emotion. The new priest is to become a new member of the family, one with potential to build up or destroy the relationships in it. Rational, bureaucratic language would not suffice.

There was little sentimentality about families. Church was a family, one person said, *because* there were conflicts, misbehaviour, and assigned roles amongst congregation members. Whereas one priest rejected the language of family as too patriarchal, it appeared that the changing nature of family life was making it easier for church members to identify non-blood relations as familial. The adoption of substitute relatives and the recognition of 'step-parents' in the congregation indicated that the family model as applied in the church was as flexible as in wider society.

I found the lay leaders very conscious of the continuing narrative of their church, but reluctant to tell the newly appointed priests about previous history. They had each deliberately chosen the candidate that would fit their understanding of the unfolding story of the church, someone who would fit in with the culture of the place but be different enough to lead in the future. One priest recognised he couldn't criticise his predecessor too soon: "like a family, outsiders can't criticise." But as a priest departed another warden commented

how hard it was for them to leave because, 'when you are a priest, the church is your family.'

Theology contained in practice

The meetings showed that some ideas are expressed primarily in practice. I met priests and lay leaders in the period between the announcement of an appointment and six weeks after the licencing service. Before the licensing service most of the priests followed custom and did not attend the church/churches to be they would be licensed, nor go to PCC. The one exception was to be licensed in an assistant role within a larger Team. What was expected was that they would get the Vicarage and especially the study in order in the time between arrival and licensing. The occupation of the Vicarage and preparation of it as a base for work, was the first task of the priest. In one parish a delay in preparing the vicarage meant that it was not ready by the time of the licensing and this caused great anxiety, relieved when the priest was finally resident. It was said that the appointment was not secure until the move had taken place.

As we were talking about the activities in which the priest would engage in this liminal time I noted that the priests themselves placed more significance on whether or not they were wearing a dog collar than the lay leaders did. The priests apparently thought they were not on official business when not wearing dog collar, as, for example they went to a service or met the parishioners before they were licensed. The lay leaders did not comment on any difference.

On reflection the experience of another ordained cleric was compared, esp those ordained locally.

Questions:

Is the language used to describe relationships and actions in a local church were are congruent with your own reading and experience?

Is the description of congregations in both theological and sociological terms convincing? Is there any conflict between these two perspectives on congregational life?

Does the description of the congregation as a family express an understanding of self as formed by relationships with others?

Notes from meeting with colleagues on 7th Aug 2014

One Area Dean of rural deanery, One parish development officer, largely rural area, some market towns, One CMD adviser, One Cathedral theologian

Nature of local church/parish/congregation

There seemed to be a tension/dialogue between the church as it should be and the church as it is - at least as it is described by lay leaders.

Nature of Local Church One participant very resistant to talk of family as too 'congregationalist.' Preferred to think of parish as location of God meeting humanity, in the celebration of eucharist, not of people who were present or not. Language of household of God also suggested, as a metaphor of place rather than solely of relationships. This was a place where there could be close relationships, contractual relationships and temporary relationships, all in same location.

(same person averse to social trinity)

[I could see good theological understanding of congregation as part of universal church, but struggled to see where the parish fitted in]. Local cong more obviously the Body of Christ as a worshipping community. [But is CofE inherently congregational, just Eliz 1 asserted that everyone should be part of congregation?]

When might family language be used?

when church is subst family - e.g. of expat church in Europe

when pattern of ministry leadership is to aim to nurture people to autonomy - growing up

when departed or distant members referred to - much aided by technology as in 'real families. When visiting former curate: "our favourite daughter has done well."

'Cathedral family' distinguished from all the others that the congregation or Canons are praying for.

Observation that clergy use this language when trying to draw the church together for a joint effort - perhaps a joint building project, when there is a need for a corporate effort and there will be contact with many others - builders, etc, who are not 'family.'

when a church plant (often led by curate) is like a member of the family branching out on their own, but supported by 'parent church.'

Diocesan parish share used to be called ' Family Purse.'

Noted that families are diverse - happy, dysfunctional, close, quiet, boisterous and so on - and churches at least as diverse.

Perhaps including parish reps - and as many of church as poss. in appointments is moving from arranged marriage model to 'love match.' An indication of how churches are changing in character and practice to match changing pattern of family life [Families ought to be 'taking name' from Christian family, not vice versa!]

It was thought that rural church often were family like units in an extended family sense, but did not use this language.

What is role of priest - can they become members of the family, or even friends of the congregation? Is there difference between local and national ministry - observation that local person can be prophetic (tho perhaps more obviously the role of the newcomer).

Social self? noted that atomised individual only an Enlightenment idea, is only alternative the feudal model? [again, taking models from own experience, not from Bible or Christian theology]

Practice as theology

All agreed that the Vicarage assumed great importance in people's understanding of ordained ministry. One recounted the angst that was

felt when he and his family found the Vicarage that had been bought by the church to be unhealthy and harmful. One, from a rural area, said that the village in which the Vicar lived was assumed to be the most important.

Implics for improving lay clergy r'ships Observation that many newly appointed people use the first person a lot, with overly ambitious ideas about what they can achieve.

New appointed should think of themselves beginning in a new culture and learn from those who cross cultures. [And try to distinguish what ought to be the case from what is.]

Contractual language of job description, competencies, etc. does not fit well with emotional system that is local congregation.

Parish reps could be asked what model of the church (cong or parish) they have and how they would like to talk about the appointment - allowing them to choose family, business, sporting, medical - but not to have to use churchmanship or abstract language.

Notes from meeting with colleagues on 18th Aug 2014

Four priests, all with sector ministry responsibility. Only one also had parish responsibilities at present, but all had in the past.

Family Immediate recounting of story of resistance in one (rural) church to change of name from Family to All Age Service. Not very coherent about the reason except sense that family service was the appropriate description.

Agreement that size of church was not the decisive factor - in one congregation of approx 150 the sense of the church family was very strong, explicitly claimed and backed up by some long standing birth families in the congregation. An even bigger church, of 900, was seen as a family by one of the staff who described the structures put in place to re-inforce the relationships between

members. These were compared to the habits formed by birth families - eg. eating together and not watching TV.

One priest wondered how SSM priests might respond, as they were both part and not part of the community. One of those present mused that he had been at the church for 10 years and still did not feel part of the family - less time than the incumbent, who clearly had a family role.

Nature of relationship phenomenon of people who had been close to one priest drifting away when another arrived - perhaps could not sustain same intensity of relationship? Over lifetime it would be too wearing to invest too much in successive priests. One partic spoke of noticeable changed relationship after a big funeral was successfully' taken. Not only appreciation of competence, but also relaxation and relief that trust could be placed in this person.

MW spoke of the effort he made to encourage the priest to talk about their desires for the appointment in terms of the aims and goals of the church, rather than expressing desire for 'the perfect priest,' or a tautology: 'a priest who prays.' This meant that the role description would be to grow the youth club, or develop the visiting team, rather than the substance of what the lay leaders expressed which was about the quality of the relationship they would have with the priest. [my suggestion was that it was this relationship which would enable the changes to happen.]

MW was partic struck by Zizioulas understanding of priesthood, as dependent on the relationship with the congregation (and Greenwood's translation of theta to an implicit contract with the congregation).

Much discussion of the downside of using family language - over congregationalist, unhelpful to some of those with bad experience of family (tho some clearly finding that church acts as a subst family.) Clergy encouraged to look at parish when choosing a place - presence of other missional outlets - schools, hospice, for example, and may not even like the congregation.

Surprising agreement the priests rarely considered whether they wanted to have an emotional relationship with the cong [and many don't seem to love them]. Like joining a family, but really not approving of all its pastimes and habits. Perhaps should ask themselves whether these are habits I would like to be shaped by. This might be a matter of churchmanship, or size of church, or sociological background. [if clergy join parish but are mostly interested in parts of it the congregation are not they will not be able to involve the cong in mission to it?]

Social identity: 'The new psychology of leadership' asserts that one can only lead if a the centre of the emotional life of a congregation. Hence need to make effort to become part of the emotional life - joining church for coffee after service, for example. [I had not realised some people might not have realised this was important]. This was challenged by the sector ministers present and concluded that this meant long term or cultural change.

Partics doubted whether the social identity idea was implicit in many lay - or clergy - minds. But, 'belonging before believing and behaving' may indicate it is implicitly present.

There needs to be more about group dynamics and how that changes when a newcomer arrives.

Church as family - noted many models available and concentration on one could be harmful. 'We area friendly church' may indicate a friendship group as well as a family. But be beware of hw explicit theology undermines espoused theology. [Perhaps do more teaching on theology of family]

The changing role of fathers in 5 years was also noted and the idea that priests were ever given elevated status "Father knows best" questioned.

God/Trinity Acknowledgement that God had not been mentioned much, but discussion of Trinity did not go far. Theological description of Congregation accepted. How does this relate to family of Church in widest sense - past and

present? Is congregation a subset, rather than the main set? Are clergy more likely to relate to wider family - or, at least, to other clergy?

Notes from meeting with colleagues on 21st August

Three Readers and one ordained sector minister, one parish priest.

Immediate reaction to 'family' was pain at divisions in the deanery between CofE churches that would not work or pray with each other. Thought this was not division within one family, but seen as different families. Tho' one person spoke of families in which breakdown had been so severe that one member was 'dead' to others.

It was thought that family language worked well within one congregation or parish.

It has been noted that Bp Stephen uses the terms 'sisters and brothers' when addressing congregation. Seen as denoting relationship with him rather than between each other and Reader who used it felt it had not gone down well. Another said it was associated with African congregation who worshipped in their church. This was compared to use by St Francis of brother and sister to talk of animal and inanimate things, to emphasise relationship with all of God's world. Bp Richard's habit of speaking of 'partners in the Gospel' just failed to communicate the emotional nature of the relationship.

Is language of family unhelpful? One person (priest) spoke of church which was supportive and there were close relationships - but lang of family not used. Better to have the community without the lang than vice versa!

It was thought that calling the priest father or mother was now just a title of respect, rather than denoting a relationship. But in some places (most?) there could be considerable projection of expectation of the roles the priest would perform. Any action of inaction has heightened significance. (Eg of forgetting to go to radio show and people talking about this).

Is this only true of the incumbent, e.g. GH does not, after 10 years feel part of the family of the large church he is licensed to, but the incumbent is placed in a key position there at once.

RJ spoke of need for time off and confusion of people who deliberately invited us out on day off. Confusion for locally ordained (is this the same for Readers?) Perhaps analogous to people who need time away from their family?

J noted that people who had been police were particularly good at adapting to public role. Someone suggested teachers as well, but not a matter of shyness or otherwise, but of assuming public persona and carrying expectations.

Noted that Christian family is an adopted one, not a birth family - God has adopted us. Hence Jesus' call to love him more than brother and sister, because the fellowship he will create will be greater. In fact we fail to make Christian family more significant and use our own birth families as norm by which to understand church. In fact, all families on earth take their name from God our Father.

Clergy/Lay interaction

The impact of the clergy household on the congregation was noted - a parish that had wanted a 'family at the Vicarage now had a single woman and her grown up daughter - and were a little bewildered. They wanted to know where the husband was! Natural to ask questions and agree the family breakdown at Vicarage impacted on all of congregation. There was still an expectation that clergy behaviour would be a model for others.

ML very interested to know what it is like for clergy socialising with parishioners - do they always talk shop? Is the dog collar a barrier to relationships - or a sheep pen that indicates an area of interaction and ministry? Sometimes limits the extent of the influence a priest has in a parish. May not be realistic - Incumbent has to chair APCM, for example, but may have no capacity for doing so.

Social identity

Agreement that people could be formed in their behaviour and self image by their membership of the congregation, especially when members over several years. This was a subconscious process - few would be aware of it. But also clear that absent members had an effect. This could be esp true of lay leaders, who were likley to have been members of a church for some time.

But is this true of all other institutions - the sailing club, for example?

Christians might be no different in expressing the image of God, but are aware of it.

One would not treat other sailors as brothers and sisters

At Eucharist, celebration of Body of Christ? - (my idea)

Are clergy and laity - or at least, incumbent and rest, experiencing the congregation differently? One as place they have chosen as place of relationship (and travelling to find one that fits*), while incumbents, who have the most significant and influential place in that system look for rest, (differentiation) from it.

*what is significance of members choice of which congregation to join? Is it on basis of relationship, rather than style of worship?

What is the local congregation?

Tension between descriptions of what church should be and what it is.

How does description of local congregation as family fit with wider family of God?

Possible to distinguish between use of family language and the reality of the relationships

Size not relevant to discussion of nature of relationships, but language used and structures creating interaction - or not, were.

Clergy lay relationships

Difference in way incumbents and congregation choose and experience congregational life.

Joining new congregation is entering a new culture, joining a new family, not just starting a new job. There is a pre-existing situation!

Congregation more likely to be looking for quality of relationship than functions and competencies.

How can clergy distinguish between work relationships and church relationships? These are voluntary relationships for congregation!

Nature of priesthood

dependent on relationship with cong? Zizioulas/ Greenwood, contract.

clergy could ask themselves - is this a place I want to be shaped by?

Ministry of being a model of relationships.

Appendix Five

Glossary

Area Bishops: A Diocese may be divided into Episcopal Areas. The Area Bishop has responsibility for that geographical area.

Area Dean/Rural Dean: Each deanery is overseen by a Rural Dean, aka. Area Dean, who is an ordained minister.

Associate Minister: A priest who has an assistant role in the local church

Benefice A benefice is an ecclesiastical office; the responsibility for care of a parish or group of parishes. The office-holder is the Incumbent or priest-in-charge.

Churchwardens The chief lay officers of a parish elected annually by parishioners with the consent of the incumbent. There are normally two Churchwardens of every parish.

CMD Continuing Ministerial Development.

Congregationalist One who believes that each local church congregational should govern itself independently of outside control.

Curate: Now used to describe an assistant post, usually in the first years after ordination.

Cure of souls 'Cure' means 'care'. The bishop has the universal cure of souls in a diocese but, subject to this, the incumbent of a benefice (or team rector and team vicar(s) in a team ministry) has the exclusive cure of souls within his or her parish or parishes.

Deanery : A group of neighbouring parishes forming an administrative area. The geographical boundaries are often a thousand or more years old.

Deanery Synod: This is made up of the clergy and elected lay representatives from the parishes.

District Church: A church other than the parish church in a statutory Team of churches.

Electoral Roll: The record of those eligible to vote at the parish church's annual meeting.

General Synod: The legislative and deliberative body of the Church of England.

House for Duty: A post that provides accommodation in exchange for two days work each week.

Incumbent: The freehold owner of a benefice

Lay Chair: A lay person who chairs the Parochial Church Council.

Licensing Service: The service at which the newly appointed priest is licensed by the Bishop

Ordinariate The Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham is a canonical structure within the Roman Catholic Church. It was established in 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI to allow Anglicans to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church whilst retaining Anglican heritage and traditions.

Ordained Local Ministry: those chosen by the parish to which they return to serve as members of the clergy.

Pastoral re-organisation: The union of parishes and/or benefices, the creation of Team and Group Ministries and the alteration of parish/deanery /archdeaconry or diocesan boundaries which may result in suspension of the rights of the patron to present a priest and subsequent renewal or lifting of suspension.

Patron: The person or body owning an advowson, or patronage (i.e. right to present a priest to a benefice) who may be a private individual or a corporation (ecclesiastical or lay).

PCC: The Parochial Church Council is the governing body of the parish

Priest-in-charge: A priest given charge of a parish by licence of the bishop. (S)he has not been presented and therefore does not own the freehold of the benefice.

Readers: Lay people who hold the Bishop's licence, having been trained to preach, lead worship and teach.

Rectors: Historically, an incumbent entitled to all tithes and income from church lands in the parish.

Resolution A A resolution passed by a PCC preventing a woman ordained as a priest from exercising certain priestly functions in the parish concerned.

Resolution B A resolution passed by a PCC preventing a woman ordained as a priest from holding the office of incumbent, priest in charge or team vicar in the benefice.

Resolution C A petition made to the bishop by a PCC for special arrangements for episcopal duties.

all under the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993.

Self Supporting Ministry (SSM): Ministry, usually priestly, carried out by unpaid volunteers.

Stipend: a form of payment that enables somebody to undertake a role without needing other waged or salaried employment.

Suspension of Presentation: Instead of the patrons selecting a candidate to present to the Bishop for induction as Incumbent, the Bishop will appoint a Priest-in-Charge.

Tractarians: aka. The Oxford Movement. Reformers of the Church of England in the 1830s, who wanted to re-introduce ritual and symbolism to the church's liturgy.

United Benefice: Union of two or more parishes, which retain their own PCCs.

Vicar: The incumbent of any benefice who is not a Rector.

Vicarage: Accommodation for the Vicar, that is part of his or her stipend.

With acknowledgements to Salisbury diocese for some of these definitions:
<<http://www.salisbury.anglican.org/parishes>> [Accessed 12 January 2015].